A

RATIONAL METHOD

For proving the Truth of the

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

As it is Profeſſed in the

Church of England.

In Anſwer to

A Rational Compendious Way to Convince without Diſpute all perſons whatſoever Diſſenting from the true Religion, By *J. K.*

By *Gilbert Burnet.*

LONDON,

Printed for *Richard Royſton,* Bookſeller to His moſt Excellent Majeſty, M DC LXXV.

To *J. K.*

SIR,

ABout two or three months ago a Noble Lady gave me your Book with a Letter that addreſſed it to me, wherein after ſome civilities I was deſired to peruſe the Book, and made hope I ſhould reap great advantages from it; and indeed if I had not learned from the Inſpired Preacher that *there is nothing new under the Sun*, or had been eaſily catched to believe Novelties, a Title and Preface that promiſed ſo much ſhould have made me apprehend I had got ſent me the Philoſophers ſtone in Divinity; and truly ſo ſhort, ſo ſure, ſo eaſie and ſo general a Method as you think you offer for curing and preventing all diſtempers about Religion, deſerved to be entertained with equal degrees of Joy and Aſtoniſhment. What a happineſs were it to Mankind after all the expence

of Bloud, all the toyl and ſweat of Care, all the Speculations and Labours of the Learned, and the Induſtry and endeavours of Stateſmen for reſolving the doubts and difficulties about Religion, to find a ſhorter and a ſafer way to get out of that trouble? But as the high pretences and promiſes of the Spagiricks make ſober people afraid to meddle with them, and do oft bring diſeſteem and neglect on the Medicines, becauſe they are overvalued: ſo I am afraid your Book ſhall have the ſame fate with clearer and unpoſſeſſed minds.

And I muſt confeſs my ſelf ſtrongly prejudiced againſt theſe hudling Methods, ſo that I always apprehend ſome Legerdemain from them. And the Title of your Book did very naturally lead me to this thought, it being a form of Speech we in *England* call a *Bull*, *A Rational way to convince without any Diſpute*, for a Rational way of Conviction is when upon a full hearing and conſidering all can be ſaid on both ſides of any debate, the evidence of Reaſon determines our perſwaſion. And to form an opini-

opinion after we have only conſidered the grounds of one ſide, is as unequal and unjuſt, as for a Judge to paſs ſentence when he has heard but one party. Now Diſputing is only the conſidering with an even ballance what all parties ſay, and the ſuſpending our Verdict till they have finiſhed their Evidence. It is therefore no Rational way but a blind and unreaſonable one that bars Diſputing; nor can it be a Conviction, but only a prepoſſeſſion when we are led into any Opinion, before all that can in reaſon be ſaid hath been examined by us. But I ſuppoſe by Diſpute you meant the eager and hot conteſts of wrangling Diſputants, who eſpouſing a party do with all the tricks and diſingenuities of Sophiſtry and the petulant Incivilities of rude treatment, manage debates as perſons more concerned for glory and victory than for truth; and rather than confeſs an eſcape and diſclaim an error, will with all the trifling arts of their embaſed Logick, defend every thing which either they themſelves have once ſaid, or that party they adhere to has maintained.

But as I paſſed from your Title through your Preface to your Book, I muſt freely confeſs I did not find in it ſuch fair and clear Reaſoning as you promiſed; and I ſaw you had a great deal of reaſon to avoid Diſputing: for nothing but a blind eaſie yielding to what you delivered could ſave your Book from being rejected. And this ſeemed to me ſo obvious, that I judged it needleſs to engage in any Anſwer to it, and ſo laid it aſide. But a few days ago a worthy and learned friend of mine told me many wiſhed ſome would be at the pains to Anſwer it, and deſired me to do it; and when I told him how it was brought to my hands, he thought I was under ſome obligation to ſend you the reaſons that lay in my way and kept me from yielding to this new Method of Conviction. I was the more eaſily perſwaded to it, that my preſent circumſtances did leave me at a greater freedom of diſpoſing of my time than I have enjoyed for ſome years.

The ſtarched formality of Dedications is as much out of eſteem with me, as out of date in this freer age; but it was na-

natural to addreſs this to your ſelf though utterly unknown to me, by any other Character than what your Book gives of you, and ſo I am in no hazard of making perſonal reflections. I ſhall firſt give you my ſenſe of your Method in all the Six points you go through, before I take any notice of what is in your Preface, which I ſhall conſider laſt of all, and with the ſame breath ſhall offer a Rational way of managing all Diſputes about *Religion* ſo, that after a full hearing of what may be ſaid we may arrive at a clear and well grounded Conviction in matters of Religion. I hope you will conſider what I go to lay before you with a mind calm and undiſturbed, and believe that in this I am acting the part of one who is ſincerely

Your Friend and Servant,

Gilbert Burnet.

IMPRIMATUR,

Guliel. Wigan.

Feb. 27. 167$\frac{4}{5}$.

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THE

THE INTRODUCTION.

NOthing doth give both occaſion and nouriſhment to Error and Miſtake more than the being prevailed on by the heats of fancy without bringing them under the ſeverer tryal of Reaſon; nor do our Imaginative powers in any caſe more certainly impoſe upon us, than when they preſent Notions to us which do at once ſurpriſe with their novelty, and delight with their apparent uſefulneſs: and none are ſooner catch'd with ſuch a bait than men of Speculative heads, accuſtomed to Diſputes and to the little tricks of Logick; for they being habituated to ſo many Axioms which paſs among them for ſacred Truths, think, if they can found a diſcourſe on ſome received Maxim, all is ſure work, and have not diſtinguiſhed aright betwixt the Colours of Truth which Wit, Eloquence and Sophiſtry can by a

deceiving Perſpective caſt on the falſeſt Propoſitions, and the cloſe Contextures of Reaſon derived from the common Notices of Truth which dwell on the minds of all men.

The ſubtletics of the Schoolmen did well enough in an Age that queſtioned nothing; but now that men are throughly awake, and having thrown off the prejudices of Cuſtome and Education call for a fuller Evidence, they are not the proper men to deal with this Age: their ignorance of mankind makes them offer many things as demonſtrations, which ſome even of the moſt trifling pretenders to Wit can undo and blow away; and their being accuſtomed to their own Topicks, not knowing how much they are rejected by men of ſeverer and more ſearching Underſtandings, makes them often beg the one half of the queſtion to prove the other. Therefore whoever would deal with our Hectors in matters of Religion, muſt know men as well as Notions and Books.

And as of old Plato *thought the Study of Geometry a neceſſary preparation to the*

the understanding the higher Mysteries of his Philosophy: So I have often judged an acquaintance with Mathematical Arts and Sciences a fit and almost necessary preparation for a right understanding and managing Theological debates; since these teach us to distinguish Critically betwixt truth and falshood, and practise a man into an exact considering of every thing that is proposed to him.

The want of this, or at least a great overlines in it appears in J. K's *late Book, wherein he thinks he leads his Reader in a Mathematical method through a great many Propositions, every one of which he imagines he has proved, beginning from a very plain unquestioned one,* That *something is* True, *and ending it in a very fruitful one,* That *every thing the* Roman *Church teaches as an Article of Faith must certainly be* True. *Undoubtedly if his method be good, that Church is infinitely beholding to him for its support, having offered an easier and clearer method for bringing the world under her Authority than any yet thought on. This he concludes as firm and sure of all sides; and by*

a clear way of Analyticks offers a Reſolution of any Theorem or Problem in Divinity even to the giving the Quadrature of that Circle their Church is forc'd to run round in, proving her own Authority from the Scriptures, and the Authority of the Scriptures from her own Teſtimony.

I ſhall without any further Introduction enter into a ſurvey of the Six Points propoſed by J. K. *to be proved, without examining the unwarineſs of his expreſſions in any of them; in which though he lies often open, yet it is of ſo little importance to quarrel about Words or forms of Speech, that I ſhall not ſtand upon them: being alſo careful to avoid the engaging in any debate that may be perſonal betwixt him and me, and therefore ſhall confine my diſcourſe to the Six Points he has gone through.*

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

It is considered, if J. K. *does prove convincingly that there is a God.*

J. K. thinks he hath proved the being of a God, by this progression of Reason, *If something be true, then this is true, That there is something better than another; which if any man deny he denies himself better than an Ass or a Block, and so is either a mad man or a fool. Now if something be better than other, then there is a best of all things; and every thing is better as it comes nearer that which is best, and this best of all things is God.*

Des Cartes is blamed by many for having left out all other Arguments for the proof of a Deity, setting up only One, which how strong soever it may be, it is a great injury to the Cause he maintains to seem to slight all other proofs may be brought for so sacred and fundamental a truth: Yet his establishing that upon a good and solid Foundation doth very much

qualifie any guilt, which is rather to be imputed to the over-valuing his own Notions than a designed betraying the Cause he undertook. But upon this occasion the Reader may be tempted to severer Censures, when the Foundations of so great a Superstructure are so ill laid, and both the Antecedent and Consequent of this Argument prove equally weak.

And in the first place, how is it proved, that some things are better than other things? or does any imagine the Atheists will admit that? On the contrary they deny there is any thing morally good or evil, and ascribe all the Notions of good and evil to Education, Custom, the several tempers and interests of men. And indeed did they acknowledge the Morality of Actions, they should yield the full half of the Debate, that men ought to be good; which would clearly make way for proving all the rest. And these men, will without any hesitation acknowledge themselves no better than Beasts or Blocks, as to any moral goodness. They will not deny but Matter is more refined in a man, the Contexture better and the Usefulness greater than in other Animals: but as to any moral goodness they plainly disclaim it. As though Wood be never so neatly wrought in a fine and useful Cabinet, yet is no better so than when it was an undressed Plank as to any moral goodness.

Thus

Thus it appears that *J. K*'s ignorance of men makes him ſtumble in his firſt attempt, nor is his next more ſucceſsful; for though ſome things be better, it will not follow there is a beſt: for of every ſort of Beings there are ſome Individuals better than other; but from that it does not follow there muſt be a beſt of that rank or order of Creatures: becauſe one Horſe is ſwifter, one Dog better ſcented, one Lyon ſtronger, therefore muſt there be a Horſe ſwifter than all others, a Dog the beſt ſcented of any, and a Lyon ſtronger than any other Lyon? This may be applied to all the Species of Creatures: for all the goodneſs theſe people admit, being only a better temper of more nimbly agitated Matter, though one thing excel another, it is not becauſe it comes nearer the beſt of all Beings, nor becauſe it recedes further from the worſt of all Beings, but becauſe it is more wieldy, more apt to ſerve the ſeveral uſes and intereſts of men; without riſing higher to conſider any Original and Standart goodneſs. Nor will this any more prove the being of one that is beſt of all, than becauſe ſome men are ſharper ſighted, others ſtronger limb'd, others of a better digeſtion, and others of a better tempered health; that therefore there muſt be one that has the ſharpeſt ſight of all men, the ſtrongeſt limbs, the beſt digeſtion and the moſt conſtant health.

Beſides, though an Atheiſt did admit there were ſome beings Morally better and worſe, this does not prove there muſt be a beſt of all Beings; for he may ſay that as naturally as Colours fit the eye and Sounds the ear, ſo ſome Notions of good are ſuitable to the minds of men, and their being better and worſe is nothing but their keeping more cloſe to theſe Notions, diſcerning them more truly and following them more conſtantly: ſo that as a man ſees well when his eye does preſent objects to him in their due Colours and diſtances, yet this proves no Deity; in like manner a man is better or worſe as he diſcerns and follows theſe common Notices more or leſs exactly.

Thus far I have conſidered this Argument, and have found it ſo weak on all ſides, that no weight is to be laid on it at all. But all this while I have been put to act a very unpleaſant part, when I did but ſeem to defend Atheiſm from any objection is brought againſt it; but I know nothing that does more prejudice a good cauſe, than when it is maintained by arguments palpably weak and unconcluding; for it makes many overly conſiderers, and more particularly thoſe that are already byaſſed and partial, imagine it has no more ſtrength in it than what it receives from the Arguments by which it was proved, ſince no concluſion (as ſuch) can have more truth in it than was in the premiſes from which it was deduced. If therefore

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the proving of a Deity be made good, by an Argument ſo fallacious that it muſt needs appear ſuch at firſt view, one that is wickedly partial may from that be fortified in his accurſed hopes, that there is none, becauſe he finds that ſo much feared truth is ſo weakly aſſerted. But that I do not leave the Atheiſts in a vain triumph, or ſeem to weaken ſo good a Cauſe, by blowing away any reaſons brought for it without ſubſtituting other and better ones in their room, I ſhall here ſay a little for the conviction of an Atheiſt.

Firſt then, all men are deſired to conſider there is no Argument that can ſo much as pretend to prove there is no God, or that a ſupreme being infinitely perfect is impoſſible; for all the Atheiſts offer at, is only to weaken thoſe Reaſons from which the belief of a Deity is inferred: ſo that ſtill it is poſſible there may be a God. And from this every man will ſee cauſe to retire his thoughts inwards to conſider what danger he is in, if there be a God and he continue to deny and deſpiſe him; and if it be poſſible there be a God, for ought he knows there may be one, ſince he has no reaſon to be aſſured of the contrary.

If upon this he yield ſo far as ſeriouſly and with even ballances to weigh what ſhall be offered to him, he is next deſired to conſider if he find not within himſelf the ſecret appre-

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henſions of a Supreme inviſible being, if the fears of offending him, the deſire of his aſſiſtance, the joy in the opinion of being acceptable to him, do not often ſpring up in his mind, and this even after all attempts to ſtifle and repreſs them. Nor can this be only the effect of Education, for every man finds by experience that all other things which he ſucked from his breeding can by a little care and attention be ſo quite forſaken, that no viſage of the firſt impreſſion ſhall remain. Since therefore theſe thoughts ſtick cloſer, there muſt be ſomewhat more than Education in the caſe.

But this will appear ſtronger if a man compare the thoughts and common ſentiments of all Nations and Ages as far as either Hiſtory or writings can lead us up, with theſe ſtirring within his own breaſt; where finding that all mankind have agreed in the belief of a Deity, he muſt needs be convinced there is ſome proportion betwixt his Soul and theſe thoughts from which he is not to be ſhaken, though he meet with ſome few in this or former Ages who have denied or doubted this truth, for theſe can never be ſet up againſt ſuch vaſt numbers as have agreed in this belief, who have been always the moſt ſober, moſt ſerious and conſidering perſons, who have cultivated all Arts and Sciences, and advanced the good of Mankind more than the whole Tribe of Libertines and Ruffians, who having abandoned them-

themſelves to their ſenſual appetites and pleaſures, and neglected the improving their minds in any thing that is either Great or Good, are not to be put in the ballance with the Religious. What have they ever done to better Mankind? On the contrary their Maxims diſſolve all the Nerves of Government, and all the duties we owe one another; and they being buried in their brutal luſts, have loſt that clearneſs of diſcerning which men of more ſober tempers have: nor do they ever converſe with their own minds, but ſtudy to guard againſt ſerious Thoughts, as effects of the Spleen and Melancholy; and the diſſoluteneſs of their Lives as it depraves their Underſtandings, ſo it makes them partial to thoſe Notions, that may give them eaſe and ſleep in their licentious practiſes. And thus he that conſults his own thoughts and the common verdict of all Mankind, will be made acknowledge a Deity.

And if he open his eyes to look on the viſible world, this will furniſh him with many Reaſons to believe an inviſible power that made it. If we conſider the Revolutions of the heavens, the interchanges of day and night, ſummer and winter, the figure of the earth, its diviſion into Sea and Land, by which all Nations communicate what they abound in to others, the inequalities of Hills and Valleys, the Lakes and Rivers that moiſten the earth, and give drink to Animals, the many productions of the

the Earth, the great variery of Plants and Vegetables with their ſeveral uſes, beſides the more inward riches of the Earth, Mines and Minerals: what man of common ſenſe can aſcribe all this to Fate or Chance? But the Structure of Animals, the Organs of Senſe, the Veſſels of Concoctions, the various Ferments, and the skilfully diſpoſed Channels for conveying nourishment to all the parts of the Body, raiſes our wonder higher which, is at its full height when we examine the parts of mans Body, which amazed *Galen*, and made him ſing a Hymn to his Maker, upon ſo aſtoniſhing a Meditation. If the Brain and ſeat of Memory and Imagination be conſidered, what a ſurprizing thing is it to find ſuch a ſubſtance the Receptacle of ſo many various Impreſſions as make up all the words of every Language we ſpeak, the figures of all perſons, places and things we have ſeen or conſidered, and that all theſe be ſo well diſpoſed that we can draw them out when we pleaſe in ſo ready and natural an order, and alſo that all words flow ſo eaſily through our Mouths?

Now this muſt either be the effect of Fate, or Chance, or of an intelligent wiſe Being. Not of Fate, for beſide that they cannot explain what that Fate ſhould be, every thing that flows from a Natural Cauſe muſt always operate the ſame way; but the great diverſities of mens Tempers, Apprehenſions and Judgments, the diffe-

difference of their Faces, Eyes, way of Speaking, Writing and Walking ſhew that they are not the effects of Fate. Nor can ſo much Regularity and parts ſo uſeful and well-diſpoſed, have run ſo together by Chance, which muſt needs be unequal and unconſtant. So that mans Formation muſt owe its Original to a wiſe Being; and that this is not the wiſdom of the Father and Mother, every one knows: therefore there muſt be ſome unſeen wiſe Being that created the Univerſe, and did not only at firſt ſet the ſeveral parts of it in thoſe Channels wherein they ſtill run, but does continue to mould this Matter according to the deſigns of his Eternal mind.

All this receives a further Confirmation from the many ſudden changes of the Courſe of Nature at the command of ſome extraordinary perſons who have forced her out of her common Methods and Operations, which is an evident demonſtration there is ſomewhat Superior to Matter and Motion, which can over-rule and govern it. This having appeared often in the ſight of many thouſands of diſcerning and impartial witneſſes, who have both confeſſed and atteſted the truth of what they ſaw and heard, we have no reaſon to doubt the matter of Fact, and as little to queſtion the being of a Deity who is Maſter of the world, and can do in it and with it what he will.

Thus

Thus far have I conſidered upon what true and ſolid grounds the belief of a Deity muſt reſt, which are indeed ſuch that we need not the help of any little piece of Sophiſtry to maintain them; they require only a ſerious and thinking temper to examine and weigh things in a fair and Rational way, without either the prejudices of Education or the partialities of luſt and intereſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

It is considered, if J. K. *proves convincingly that there must be some true Religion.*

THE next step *J. K.* makes, is to prove that there must be a true Religion, which he defines, *A Doctrine that teaches men in what manner God will be worshipped by them, and in what matters he will be obeyed by them.* Now he proves this, *for if there be a true God, we ought to worship him in what manner he will be worshiped by, and obey him in what matters he will be obeyed by us, as subjects and servants reverence and obey their Soveraigns and Masters. Therefore if God be the best and greatest of all things, we are his subjects and servants, for certainly he is* the *supreme Governour of the Universe*; and this he thinks none *who grant a true God can deny, and this way of Worship must be assigned by God and men must know it.*

This is the substance of what *J. K.* says on this head, which is so extremely weak and ill proved that I am amazed he did not see it. For he must remember he only pretended there was a Being best of all others. Now though that were true, it will not follow from that, that

that I muſt Worſhip or Obey God, much leſs that I am his ſubject and ſervant: all that will follow being only, that I ought to eſteem him the beſt of all Beings; but why Adore or Obey him, and why am I his ſervant or ſubject?

Adoration and Obedience can only be exacted as acts either of Juſtice, Gratitude or Intereſt. If any have a right to my Worſhip or Obedience, they are due to him in Juſtice; or if he have put ſuch Obligations on me that theſe are but a proportioned return and acknowledgment of them, then they are due in Gratitude; or if he be able to confer extraordinary favours, or inflict moſt ſevere puniſhments, then the avoiding his diſpleaſure and the procuring his favour are neceſſary on the account of my own Intereſt, and ſo I muſt ſtudy to pleaſe him by Worſhip and Obedience: but nothing of all this will follow if it be only proved that there is a beſt of Beings, which is all *J. K.* attempted.

And hence it was that though the *Epicureans* acknowledged ſuch a Deity as he thinks he has proved, yet they denying both Creation, Providence and another State, did throw off the care and thoughts of Religion as the effects of fear and ſuperſtition. And *J. K.* defining Religion to be *a Doctrine teaching us to worſhip and obey God ſo as he will have us do, goes to prove there muſt be a Religion, becauſe if there be a God,*

God, he muſt be Worſhipped and Obeyed ſo as pleaſes him. Now this being his definition of Religion, and by conſequence all one with it, he proves that *if there be a God, there muſt be a Religion,* thus: *if there be a true God, there muſt be a true Religion.* And how ſophiſtical a way of procedure this is, common ſenſe, not to ſay Logick, does make appear. And thus he is again unhappy in this his ſecond ſtep.

But as in the former Section I judged it neceſſary to ſubſtitute ſome better proofs of a Deity than he gave; ſo I ſhall now offer ſome ſtronger Arguments to prove there muſt be a Religion. And firſt, if God be the Creator of all things and the Author of our beings, as was already proved; then we are his ſubjects by that right of Creation and owe our Nature, Reaſon and Life wholly to him. Therefore as in juſtice we ought to acknowledge this by our thankful Praiſes and Adorations; ſo we ought by the ſame juſtice to give our ſelves up to him, and do and ſuffer what he will have us do and ſuffer. And this is confirmed by thoſe impreſſions of Awe and Reverence which, as was before proved, the greateſt and beſt, nay and often the worſt part of Mankind feel on their hearts. Which with the checks and pangs of Conſcience for ſins, ſhews how Religion is natural to the Soul, and proportioned to our faculties. Again, if God created the world and all things in it, he muſt uphold, preſerve

and govern his own workmanſhip, which the regular courſe of Nature, with the dayly productions of it, do demonſtrate. And it is no leſs clear from the extraordinary and miraculous interruptions and changes, which by his great power are given to the common courſe of Second cauſes. Now if there be a ſupreme Providence that watcheth over all humane things, and from whoſe care all the bleſſings of this life flow upon us; then we ought to make returns ſutable to ſuch favours, and likewiſe implore the continuance of them.

Finally, if there be a God that made and governs all things, he muſt be both ſo good and ſo juſt as to protect and reward all who truſt in him and ſerve him, this being the natural reſult of juſtice and goodneſs; and there muſt be ſome diſcrimination between thoſe that worſhip and obey him, and thoſe that do not ſo. Now this is not done in this life; for often thoſe who Fear and Love him are in great Miſeries, Pains and Troubles, and live and die moſt uncomfortably, whereas thoſe who diſhonour and diſobey him, are often in great honour and eſteem, and abound in all outward advantages; nor is there any viſible diſcrimination in this Life: yet that being inſeparable from the notion of juſtice and goodneſs, it muſt certainly be done at ſome time or other. Since therefore it is not in this Life, it muſt be in another; therefore we muſt believe our Souls

ſhall

ſhall outlive this ſtate. When likewiſe we conſider, that Matter in all its ſubtileſt refinings and nimbleſt motions gives no diſcoveries of Senſe or Cogitation, and yet we feel a Thinking being within us, which we plainly perceive to be a Being different from Matter both in its actings and nature, we conclude there is a principle in us that muſt not neceſſarily die at the diſſolution of this life. Which is confirmed from innumerable ſtories of the Apparitions of ſome Rational beings ſeparated from Bodies which in all Ages and places of the world have abounded, and are as certainly atteſted as ever any matter of Fact hath been. Which ſhews, that there are Beings diſtinct from Matter; and that our Souls are ſuch, their ſubtle reaſonings both Metaphyſical and Mathematical do demonſtrate.

Their ſurviving this Body is alſo gathered from their frequent aſcent above material Figures and Phantaſms in their Conceptions and Inferences; which ſhews, they do not ſo much depend on matter as not to outlive their union with it. In fine; The common apprehenſions which all Thinking men, in all Ages, have owned, and which appears in the greateſt part of all both good and bad at their death, ſhews the belief of this is among thoſe common Notices of truth which are born with the Soul.

From all which I may fairly aſſume, That there is another ſtate in which our Souls ſurviving their union with our Bodies ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed as they have deſerved well or ill at the hands of the great Creator and Judge of all men. And therefore if our own intereſts touch us or prevail upon us, and the apprehenſions of future rewards or puniſhments work on our fears or hopes, we muſt carefully avoid all diſhonouring, diſobeying or offending this God; and with the ſame care we muſt ſtudy to acknowledge our beings are of him and for him, and that all the bleſſings of this Life are the effects of his Bounty, for which we muſt thank him; and adoring his bleſſed Attributes and Perfections we muſt dedicate our whole Lives to his ſervice: that ſo we may ſtill enjoy his favour here, and in the next life receive the rewards of good and faithful ſervants.

And thus upon good and ſolid foundations I have built up this propoſition, That there muſt be ſome true Religion.

CHAP.

CHAP III.

It is considered if J. K. *proves convincingly that there must be some true Revealed Religion.*

J. K. goes on to prove this Religion must be Revealed, which he performs thus: *How can we know Gods will unless he Reveal it to us either immediately or mediately? For natural Religion teaches only in general that we ought to Worship and Obey God, but does not teach the particular manner or matters of this Worship and Obedience: therefore there is a necessity of this Revelation. Yea, if God had left this to the Choice of every one, yet at least that must be revealed.*

In this Reasoning J. K. hath forgot a very necessary distinction of Revelation, into that which is communicated naturally to the Soul, and that which is superadded by some extraordinary manifestation or inspiration. In the former sence it cannot be denyed, but it is necessary there be a Revelation of Religion: but that is not what J. K. drives at. Now he must be very ignorant if he does not know that the greatest part of the Philosophers believed there were on the Souls of all men such inscriptions

of Truth, that if all ſhould purifie their minds from the defilements Luſt ſuperinduced upon them, they ſhould then clearly diſcern every thing that the Deity enjoyned them; and therefore they looked upon Inſpiration as a degree of madneſs, which was only incident to weaker minds, whoſe imaginative powers were too hard for their reaſons. And indeed they knew ſo much of the juglings of their Oracles, that no wonder they ſtudied to detract from their Authority all they could. Now I deſire *J. K.* will review his diſcourſe, and ſee what ſtrong or good reaſons it offers for the conviction of thoſe of this perſwaſion. So that his Argument proving only that God muſt reveal how he will be Worſhipped and Obeyed, if it be replyed that it is done to all men by thoſe common Notices of Truth that are born with their Souls, he hath furniſhed us with nothing to prove a further Revelation neceſſary.

To make good this therefore againſt the Philoſophers, it is not to be denied but if mankind had continued in the purity wherein God did create our Natures, their Reaſons were ſtrong, but they themſelves complained of a great depravation of their Natures, which they found were much prevailed on by Senſes and ſenſible objects, by Education, Cuſtome, Corporeal pleaſure, and the power of Fancy. And for clearing of this they apprehended another Prior ſtate wherein our Souls for ſome

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treſpaſs had loſt their wings and plumes, and ſo were degraded into Bodies. This ſhews they found ſome corruption on their Nature from which they ſtudied to emerge; and did indeed attempt moſt gloriouſly the recovering themſelves to their firſt original. This being then confeſſed that our minds are much darkned, and that our bodies, appetites and fancies are too ſtrong for them, it will thence very naturally follow, that as our reaſons cannot diſcover all things to us, ſo that our way of apprehending of divine things may carry along with it much of a body and groſs phantaſms.

This was evidently demonſtrated in that numberleſs variety of Opinions into which all Nations were divided about Religion; a great mixture of bodily phantaſms, and groſs pleaſures appearing both in their opinions and practiſes about Religion. Nor was this only the fate of the Rabble, but both *Tully* and *Varro* have given us an account of the great diverſity was among Philoſophers about the very Notion and Nature of a Deity. And if they differed ſo much in their thoughts of that primitive and firſt Truth, into how many diviſions may we imagine they muſt have run about the other Truths to be deduced from that?

Since therefore men did ſo grope after all the diſputes and ſpeculations of Philoſophers in which there was no certainty, nor had any

of them ſuch plenary Authority as to oblige others to ſubmit to their deciſion; thence I infer the neceſſity of ſome clear and certain way for ſatisfying all mankind in things of ſo great and univerſal concern. The Speculations of Philoſophers were neither certain nor (ſuch as they were) evident to men of weaker underſtandings; the only way therefore to avoid this, was either to make ſuch plain and glorious Manifeſtations of God's preſence and pleaſure as the *Jews* had on mount *Sinai* and in their moſt holy place, or to authorize ſome men by divine Inſpirations to reveal God's will to mankind. Now there is no impoſſibility in the notion of an *Inſpiration*. For if we make known our thoughts to one another, either by forming ſuch a ſound, or writing ſuch Characters as ſhall convey into the ears or eyes of others Corporeal Impreſſions from which they may judge of our thoughts, which is a great way about and much more unintelligible (though we are very ſure it is true) then that a ſpirit ſhall communicate its thoughts to our underſtandings, which it may either do by ſuch outward impreſſions on our ſenſes as bring the thoughts of other men to our knowledge, or without theſe outward objects may make the ſame Impreſſions on our Brain. And like to this, are the impreſſions made on us in ſleep, in which we imagine we converſe with the objects of ſenſe. Or finally, without the means of any Corporeal phantaſms, a ſpirit, eſpecially

ally the ſupreme and ſoveraign ſpirit, may immediately convey to our underſtanding its pleaſure, as well as our underſtandings do receive hints from groſs phantaſms, which is a great deal harder to conceive than this.

Thus the Atheiſt can propoſe nothing that will prove there can be no Inſpiration; but there is great neceſſity of guarding this both from the juglings of Impoſtors and the more innocent though no leſs hurtful deceits of our heated fancies, which may obtrude their Notions on us as Divine; eſpecially in ſome in whom the Spleen or hyſterical diſtempers may produce ſtrange effects: therefore this muſt be well proved, and warranted before others are bound to acknowledge or ſubmit to it, nor muſt the great heats and divine Raptures of the inſpired perſon ingage our belief. We know how the *Sibylls* were ſaid to be inſpired, and with what Bacchick fury many heathen Prieſts delivered ſome of their Impoſtures; and it is dayly ſeen what ſtrange appearances of inſpiration are in hyſterical perſons. Therefore it muſt be accompanied with ſuch other extraordinary Characters as can neither be the forgeries of Juglers nor the vapours of the Spleen or Mother; and theſe are Miracles or Prophecies which are certain indications of ſome extraordinary and ſupernatural preſence with the inſpired perſons.

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And thus far I have helped *J. K.* to prove the neceſſity of Revelation for the aſcertaining mankind of the Worſhip and Obedience that God requires, and have met with the great objections which Deiſts and other enemies to Revelation bring againſt it. But I now follow him to his fourth propoſition about the truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

It is conſidered if J.K. *hath proved convincingly the truth of the Chriſtian Religion.*

J. *K.* goes on in his Series of truths, and his next attempt is to prove the truth of Chriſtian Religion. And indeed the Atheiſm that hath of late broke out in the world and in upon us, hath engaged ſo many excellent pens of all the parties and diviſions of Chriſtendom to ſtand up in vindication of our moſt holy Faith with ſo much cloſeneſs of Reaſon, that it may be juſtly a problem, whether that peſtiferous contagion hath not occaſioned as much good to Chriſtian Religion, by the many admirable Treatiſes have been writ for it upon that account, as it hath done hurt by its own venome. But to ſee *J. K.* manage ſo glorious a Cauſe ſo poorly and ſo faintly, after all that light which theſe Books offer, does juſtly raiſe Indignation; and it is plain he was afraid to bring out the ſtrongeſt proofs for it, leſt it ſhould appear there was much more to be ſaid for the Verity of the Chriſtian Religion, than can be for the Roman: but *J. K.* being reſolved to prove there was no more to be ſaid for the one than for the other, and therefore would manage this Cauſe faintly, that he might maintain the other more ſtrongly, and ſo it ſeems cares not with how ſlender Evidence

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he assert the truth of Christianity, so that the truth of the Roman Religion be but as undisputed.

His great Argument for its truth is, *That it hath been miraculously propagated, which could not have been without true and real Miracles, and these are manifest proofs of that truth which they confirm. Now since Christian Religion, though it contains Mysteries far above the reach of humane reason, and severities contrary to humane Inclinations, yet has been propagated without the help of Arms or humane enticements, by men of themselves unfit for so great a work, and hath overcome other Religions which were both well established and preached liberty and pleasures.*

Then this was either done with Miracles or without them; if with them, it is confessed there were Miracles; if without them, such a propagation must be confessed to be a Miracle. This is the substance of what *J. K.* brings for the proof of the Christian Religion.

But this alone cannot satisfie a considering mind. For it is acknowledged by all who believe any Religion, that the power of evil spirits is very great, and far above ours; so that Miracles cannot determine my belief, since there must go somewhat previous to that. Therefore *Moses* told the people of *Israel*, that though a Prophet by

Deut. 13 1.

by a Sign or wonder did amuſe them, and upon that perſwaded them to go after other gods, they ſhould not hearken to that Prophet, but put him to Death. And S. *Paul* tells us, that if an Angel from heaven ſhould preach another Goſpel, he muſt be anathematized. So that Miracles or other extraordinary apparitions do not prove a Prophet. *Gal.* 1.8,9.

Therefore the firſt and great Argument for the proof of the Chriſtian Religion is, the purity of the Doctrine, and the holineſs of its precepts, which are all ſo congruous to the common Impreſſions of nature and reaſon; and this muſt prove, (as our Saviour himſelf taught us) that his Miracles were true ones, and not wrought by the Prince of Devils, ſince his Doctrine is oppoſite and deſtructive of his Intereſt and Kingdom. And our Saviour alſo aſſerts the truth of what he ſaid, moſt commonly from this Topick, that he came not to do his own will but the will of him that ſent him, that he ſought not himſelf nor his own honour, but his Father's. S. *Mat.* 12. 24, *to* 31.

Again our Saviour aſſerts his authority from the Prophecies of *Moſes* and the other inſpired perſons of that Diſpenſation, whoſe predictions of the *Meſſias* did all agree to him and receive completion in him. And from theſe our Saviour

often ſilenced the *Jews*; and this is to us ſtill a ſtrong Argument, that theſe Books which the enemies and blaſphemers of our Religion have ſtill kept as ſacred, and had among them for ſome thouſands of years, do give ſuch clear and evident Characters of our Saviour as their *Meſſias*, as muſt needs convince every ſerious and ſober enquirer.

Theſe are the chief and great proofs of the authority of our Saviour, by which we are aſſured that all the mighty works he did, were by the preſence and wonderful aſſiſtance of a Divine ſpirit. And for the Miracles themſelves *J. K.* would reſolve all our certainty concerning them into a miraculous propagation of Chriſtianity. So that if there be no other certain way to prove them, then if Chriſtian Religion had not been ſo propagated as it was, it could not have been made out that it was true; and if ſo, what muſt have been the ſtrong Arguments uſed for it before it was ſo propagated? Either theſe were convincing or not; if they were not convincing, then it being propagated by weak and unconcluding Arguments, we cannot be bound to ſubmit to it or believe it; if theſe Arguments were convincing, we either know them, or we know them not; if we know them not, how can we judge they were convincing? if we know them, then we may be as well convinced by them as thoſe were to whom they were at firſt propoſed.

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The great Argument the Apoſtles offered was, that our Bleſſed Saviour wrought many Miracles in the ſight of the *Jews*, and that he being dead and laid in the grave was raiſed from the dead, and after a long ſtay with them on earth they ſaw him aſcend with great glory to Heaven; of all which they were witneſſes. Now theſe being matters of Fact ſo poſitively atteſted by ſo many eye-witneſſes who were men of great probity, (that could not be caſt on the pretence of their being hired or bribed, there being no intereſt could lead them to give that teſtimony but only truth, all other conſiderations deterring them from it) there was good reaſon then, and remains ſo ſtill to believe this true, whether the world had embraced it or not. And I will ask *J. K.* what if the *Gentiles* had rejected their teſtimony as well as the *Jews* did? yet if theſe ſacred writings had been with a moſt Religious care conveyed down to us, had we not been bound to believe the Goſpel? certainly we had, for the Apoſtles were men, who upon the ſtricteſt tryal of Law muſt be admitted as competent witneſſes; they were well informed of what they heard, and ſaw for a tract of three or four years; they were plain ſimple men who could not in reaſon be ſuſpect of deep deſigns or contrivances; they in the teſtimonies they gave do not only vouch private ſtories that were tranſacted in corners, but publick matters ſeen and known

known of many hundreds; they all agreed in their teſtimony, ſo that the fumes of melancholy could not lead ſo many into ſuch an agreement of miſtakes. Their teſtimonies if falſe might have been eaſily diſproved, the chief power being in the hands of their enemies, who neither wanted power, cunning nor malice. And in fine, the truth of their teſtimony appears in their conſtant adhering to it, from which neither impriſonments, whippings, tortures, no not death it ſelf could divert them.

From all which it is as evident as is poſſible any matter of Fact can be, that their teſtimony was true, and this diſcourſe muſt hold good whether the world had received and believed their report or not. Which was the more fully confirmed by the miraculous operations of the Apoſtles in the name of Chriſt, by which they did caſt out Devils and cure all manner of diſeaſes; and to this they appeal in their Epiſtles and Acts which were publiſhed at that time wherein had the matter of Fact not been true, they had been branded as bold and impudent Impoſtors.

We have alſo a Series of Books in all Ages citing the Writings wherein theſe Teſtimonies are contained; by which we know they were written at that very time. And the Apologiſts for the Chriſtian Faith in their Apologies appeal to the wonders that were ſtill wrought for confir-

confirmation of the Faith; nor can we imagine, that men of common ſenſe, not to ſay Modeſty and Ingenuity, would have appealed to proofs that were ſlender and falſe in matter of Fact.

Thus we ſee that great confirmation of our Saviour from his Miracles is made good by another way of proof than by the propagation of it, which I do not deny doth very ſtrongly make out the truth of all, yet is rather a conſequent confirmation of what hath been ſaid, than an antecedent argument for proving it. So though it be far from my thoughts to weaken this way of confirming Chriſtian Religion, yet it is plain that an extraordinary propagation will not infer the truth of the Doctrine, though it be allowed it was done by Miracles; ſince we cannot be aſſured theſe Miracles are wrought by a good Spirit till we firſt conſider the Doctrines they confirm, whether they be good or not. It doth alſo appear that the truth of theſe Miracles is made out abundantly to us, abſtracting from the way of propagating them.

But in end we muſt a little examine what this way of propagating them was, and we ſhall find that notwithſtanding all the calumnies and leſſer perſecutions of the *Jews*, of the deriſion of the Philoſophers, of the prejudice carnal luſts and appetites laid in the way; and above all, of the violent oppoſitions given it

by the Roman Emperors who ſpared no cruelty for a Succeſſion of three Ages and ten Perſecutions that hell or heliiſh men could deviſe for deſtroying it : yet it prevailed, and in a few years did ſpread to the aſtoniſhment of the world ; and all other Religions were not only overthrown by the many Converts were daily flocking in to the Chriſtian Church, but by the ruine of theſe very Religions. Judaiſm fell to the ground by the ſubverſion of their Temple, and the total ruine and diſperſion of their State begun by *Veſpaſian* and *Titus*, and compleated by *Trajan* and *Hadrian* ; nor could their attempts though cheriſhed by an apoſtate Emperour ſucceed for the rebuilding their Temple, Heaven and Earth combining to break off the work. Heatheniſm did alſo receive a mortal blow, by the ſilencing the Oracles upon the beginnings of Chriſtianity, which were the great ſupports of that Religion with the vulgar. And the exemplary lives, the heavenly Doctrines, the mutual Charity, and the noble Conſtancy of the firſt Witneſſes and Martyrs of the Chriſtian Faith, wrought not a little on all that beheld them, even on ſuch as were very partial and byaſſed againſt them. And the Chriſtian Religion being thus univerſally received, as it is a very full demonſtration that theſe Miracles were no forgeries, but known and approved truths : So alſo it confirms in us a belief, that there was an extraordinary preſence of God in theſe beginnings of Chriſtianity,

aſſiſting

assisting and animating those Converts of all Ages, Sexes and Qualities to adhere to it under all the discouragements and sufferings they were to pass through, whether occasioned by the irregular appetites of their own carnal lusts, or by the outward oppositions they met with.

And thus far I have considered how the truth of Christian Religion can be made out against the opposition of Atheists, Infidels or Deists. Hitherto I have waited on *J. K.* in the survey of these Truths about which we are agreed, and I hope, upon a review of what we have both performed, he will not deny but I have strengthened his Positions with the accession of many more, and better Arguments than any he brought. So that if he be in earnest zealous for these four great Truths, he will rejoyce to see such a supplement, to what he had so scantly proposed. But I am afraid (and perhaps not without reason) that he knowing how weak his Arguments must needs be for the two positions that follow, and yet designing to impose on the Reader all the Six as equally certain, he would needs disguise the first Four, and propose them so weakly guarded, that the proofs of all the Six might be of a piece. But I have hitherto helped *J. K.* henceforth I quit that part, and go to enter in a down-right opposition to him in what remains.

CHAP. V.

It is conſidered, if J. K. *proves convincingly that the Roman Catholick Religion is true.*

J. K. now comes to that which he drove at all along and proves it thus: *If Chriſtian Religion be true, then that Religion which has the ſame proofs that it hath, at leaſt any of them that are ſolid, muſt needs be true. Since then the miraculous propagation of Chriſtianity is a common, ſolid and evident proof of its truth, therefore the Roman Catholick Religion muſt be true ſince it is ſolidly proved by the like propagation; for though it contains very hard Myſteries in it above the reach of humane reaſon, as Tranſubſtantiation, and ſome very hard Precepts and Counſells, as Vows, Faſts, Confeſſion, prohibition for Prieſts to marry,* &c. *yet it hath been propagated over a great part of the world without the help of Arms or humane Enticements, by ſtrangers who have converted Nations from Paganiſm to embrace the Chriſtian Faith, as S.* Auſtin *the Monk did in* England, *and* Xaverius *in the* Indies, *and many others in other places, which can be manifeſtly proved from Hiſtory, nor can any exception be made againſt it, which the enemies of Chriſtianity may not make againſt the*

ſame proof brought for the Chriſtian Religion. And to uſe S. Auſtin's *dilemma, This propagation of Roman Catholick Religion was either with or without Miracles: if with Miracles, it muſt be true, ſince confirmed by Miracles; if without them, then no Miracle is greater than this propagation. By which it appears, we have as good ground to be Roman Catholicks, as we have to be Chriſtians.*

By this time I ſuppoſe it is clear enough why *J. K.* would bring no better proofs for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion; and now he thinks he has gained his deſign: but what I ſaid in the former Section has undermined this Fabrick, ſince it is made out that the miraculous propagation is neither the only nor the chief proof of Chriſtianity, but that before we believe even the Miracles of our Saviour to be of God, two things were to be made out; the one that his Doctrine was all holy and ſuch as tended to the glory of God; the other was, that all he ſaid and delivered agreed with the Prophecies had gone before. So by the ſame rule of proceeding we muſt firſt ſee that all the parts of the Roman Religion are holy and ſuch as tend to the glory of God, and then, that they agree as fully with both the Teſtaments, as our Saviours Doctrine did with *Moſes* and the Prophets.

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If this Method be taken I am afraid *J. K.* will find it a hard task to prove the holiness of all the Roman Doctrines. What a Sanctuary for all manner of Vice and Impiety is the Popes power of Dispensing, Pardoning and giving Indulgences for all sins upon such trifling accounts? Witness the present year with all the favours and Indulgences to such as go to the thresholds of the Apostles? What a patrociny to impenitence is their Opinion, of a simple Attrition being sufficient for the Sacrament? And the whole trade of their penances and absolutions looks like a design to quiet all mens Consciences, let them lead as bad lives as they will. Besides, who can believe that to be a true Religion, that has tolerated a great many Casuists who have found out distinctions to excuse men from all the duties they owe God and their Neighbour? and have studied to satisfie men in the most impious and immoral practises? A woman that entertains common and avowed Prostitutes will never be thought an honest woman, though none could prove her self guilty of any base act. So that Church that not only entertains but cherishes tho'e who have studied to discharge mankind of all sense of Religion and Vertue, can never pass for a pure Church. Nor does the Doctrine of that Church tend wholly to the glory of God as our Saviours did; for what greater dishonour can be done him than to Worship him in a way which him-

ſelf has ſo often condemned, and never ſince allowed, by the repreſentations of Pictures and Images? And that inſtead of addreſſing their Adorations and Prayers to him by his Son, have found out a great many other Mediators both Angels and Saints and the Bleſſed Virgin? Surely this is highly to the diſhonour of God, when the Souls of people are turned off from their Faith, and dependence on him and his bleſſed Son into a truſting to and calling on Creatures; and when inſtead of that plain ſimple and rational Worſhip that is ſutable to the Divine nature and pleaſing to him, the mimical pageantry of a Thouſand little apiſh practiſes and an unknown Worſhip are brought into his Church.

If we likewiſe conſider and meaſure the Roman Religion by the ſecond great Topick by which our Saviour cleared himſelf, which was his appealing to the Scriptures, we will quickly find good reaſon to ſuſpect them guilty there, ſince they ſtudy nothing more than the ſuppreſſing and concealing the Scripture, and by all means labour to prove it an incompetent rule to decide Controverſies by: And yet I am ſure, *J. K.* will give me no reaſon to prove the Scriptures an unproper rule for deciding Controverſies, and that we muſt ſubmit to the verdict and decree of the Church, that might not with more ſtrength been made uſe of by the *Jews* againſt our Saviour. And if I carry

this

this consideration as far as it will go, it must necessarily lead me to compare all the Doctrines of the Roman Religion with the Scriptures; And as if our Saviours Doctrine had been contrary to the Law of *Moses*, there had been no reason to have believed him for all his mighty deeds, which in that case might justly have been imputed to evil spirits; so now should an Angel from heaven teach any thing contrary to this Doctrine and Gospel, he must be anathematized, even though he wrought mighty wonders. Therefore we are with the *Bereans* to examine all new Doctrines, by their conformity to the Scriptures, and till that appear, we are not to look on any thing they do as miraculous. And thus far, I hope, I have said enough to convince *J. K.* that though what he says of the miraculous propagation of the Roman Religion were true, it does not from that follow that the Religion it self must be true. But I go next to convince him how much he mistook himself in his account, when he asserted that the Christian and the Roman Religion were propagated in the same manner, and shall first examine his grounds.

His first Branch of the Comparison is, that as the Christian Religion contains some high Mysteries in it above the reach of humane Reason, so does the Roman Religion in holding Transubstantiation. He did well to distinguish this from the Mysteries of the Christian Religion,

gion, for it is indeed none of them; nor is it above humane Reason as he calls it, but contrary to it and not at all to be compared to the Mysteries of Christian Religion, as the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The last of these contains nothing in it that may not be Rationally enough conceived as very possible and easy to Divine Omnipotence; for the other Mysteries that concern God, it is no wonder those be above our understandings, since the divine Nature is so vastly exalted above all our depressed Notions of things, and therefore is not a proper object for our Faculties. So no wonder we cannot frame such clear conceptions of his Nature, as to give a distinct account of it to our Reasons. But a material object proposed to our senses, is proportioned to our Faculties. And therefore we must either believe the clear evidence our Faculties give us of the Bread and of the Wine, after the Consecration, or turn Scepticks for ever, since full evidence to our Faculties is all can possibly be offered for our conviction; and if that in any case fail, it is in no case certain. So that if our Senses fail in this, we have no reason to receive any thing upon their Testimony; for a noted Liar in one thing is to be believed in nothing, even though his lie had been discovered by a divine Revelation. Now if we weaken the evidence of Sense, all the authority of the Christian Religion which it received from the Miracles will be weakned, for these were only known

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by the Senſes of the ſpectators. And ſo far of the firſt branch of the parallel.

The Second branch of the parallel is, that as the Chriſtian Religion enjoyns diverſe ſeverities, to embrace Croſſes, to Love our enemies, and to Mortifie our paſſions; ſo alſo the Roman teaches very hard precepts and Counſels, as Vows, Faſts, Confeſſion, prohibition for Prieſts to Marry, to which *J. K.* adds an *&c.* The Chriſtian Religion does indeed command diverſe duties contrary to our natural appetites, but thoſe are things of themſelves Morally good and ſuch as do highly perfect our Natures: But the Roman Religion has made a ſhift to find means for voiding all theſe Sacred obligations, and to ſet a great many little trifling performances inſtead of them which have no tendency to the purifying of our Natures or the bettering of Mankind. How much they have detracted from the obligation to all the ſeverer, and unalterably Moral Duties of Chriſtianity hath been already (and ſhall be more fully) laid open, if it be called for, though that be needleſs, it being ſo clearly done by many better Pens; but for thoſe they have ſubſtituted in their room, let us a little conſider theſe *J. K.* mentions, and to begin with Vows.

We do not deny that the firſt deſign of Monaſteries in the primitive Church was excellent, but

but it quickly began to degenerate into idleneſs and ſuperſtition, which S. *Jerome* though inclined enough to the ſeverities of that courſe of Life, hath fully told us. But how they did afterwards ſink into all the Corruptions imaginable, all Hiſtories inform us. And whatever may be ſaid for ſuch Houſes, as either Seminaries for the Church, or Sanctuaries for thoſe that are no more able to labour in it; yet certainly the entanglements of Vows is a yoke which none can be aſſured he ſhall be able to bear. We ought to Vow and pay our Vows unto God, and therefore ſhould be ſure to Vow nothing but that whereof the execution is in our power. Now when we Vow to ſerve God, which we do in the Sacraments, we are aſſured of the aid of the Divine Grace to aſſiſt us in the performance. But to Vow things which we are not ſure to perform, our tempers being ſo liable to Change, that what agrees with them at one time, becomes an intolerable burden and ſnare at another, is certainly to caſt our ſelves headlong into many temptations. And what unnatural and brutal luſts have abounded in theſe Houſes, we read a great deal more than I am willing to repeat. What a cheat is the pretence to poverty in thoſe Orders which have got ſuch vaſt Riches that they are become the envy of the world, as the *Benedictins*, the *Carthuſians*, and the *Jeſuits*? And for the begging Orders, it is both againſt the rules of Chriſtian Religion and all good Govern-

Government to allow, much more to encourage ſuch ſwarms of idle fellows, who ſhall always go rambling and begging about, and do not work that they may eat. And for their obedience what a rack it may be under a Tyrannical Superiour, and what an engine it may prove for Sedition and diſturbance, I leave to all to judge. 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 11. 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 10.

In a word, all ſuch ſeverities as tend to the ſubduing our luſts and paſſions are good and ſutable to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity; but for overcharging men with new burdens (which ſignifie nothing but to create a perpetual trouble and conſtant ſcrupuloſity) is to abridge them of their Chriſtian liberty without cauſe, and tends to ſwell them up with pride, and a lofty opinion of their meriting by ſuch practiſes and a contempt of others, who though they bear none of theſe voluntary aſſumed burdens, yet are more meek, more humble, and more charitable, and in all things more conformable to the life and doctrine of our Bleſſed Saviour. And if voluntary ſeverities be a character of a true Religion, the Prieſts of *Baal*, the worſhippers of *Diana Taurica*, the *Ebionites*, the *Montaniſts*, the *Encratites*, and many other hereſies might have put in a fair claim ſince they abounded in them.

From your Vows I go to your Fasts. God forbid we should disclaim Fasting which our Saviour did so much recommend, both by his example and Commands: we acknowledge it a powerful mean, both for mortifying all bodily lusts, and for disposing the mind to prayer, and all other spiritual exercises; and therefore we do not allow these to the Roman Church as peculiar to them. And I do not believe any of them will justifie the corruptions they are palpably guilty of in the observance of their Fasts, which are generally only a change of diet, wherein no severity nor strictness is to be seen. Wine is liberally drunk, the most delicate Fishes with the most exquisite way of dressing them are sought for, and no other mixtures of higher Devotion appear on these weekly or annual returns.

For Confession, I know no Christians that deny the usefulness of it; but the setting up the necessity of Auricular Confession, as it hath driven out of their Church the primitive and publick Confession with all the ancient discipline which was indeed the great glory of those Ages, and the chief preservative of Piety, and good manners; so, as they have it among them, it hath been one of the greatest engines of Hell for driving out of the minds of men all sense of the duties of a holy and good life. I do not deny but some Priests among them make

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good uſe of it; but thoſe being very few, it does give but a ſmall allay to the groſs corruptions which even many grave and pious Writers of their own Communion complain of and condemn. Shall I here mention the giving Abſolution, and admitting to the Sacrament upon Confeſſion before any part of the Penance be performed, the trifling Penances are often enjoyned, the taking Confeſſions from perſons unknown, the receiving it when it is apparent they are only reciting their ſins without any Compunction? And for Contrition they confeſs it is not neceſſary. Now the generality of that Church being perſwaded that if they Confeſs with a little Attrition, and be Abſolved and receive the Sacrament, they ſtand clear and innocent in the preſence of God, whatever their former life have been, or their preſent temper may be; Is not here a very ſure way to defeat the whole deſign of Religion and Holineſs, when men are taught ſo eaſie a way of getting into the favour of God without repenting of and forſaking their ſins? And thus it appears that in the Roman Church Confeſſion is no ſeverity, but a thing very grateful to fleſh and blood.

The laſt particular *J. K.* inſtances, is the prohibition of Prieſts to Marry. Truly if to reckon that impure, which the holy Spirit of God hath declared honourable in all without exception, be a great ſublimity, they may well glory

glory in it. Our Saviour recommended Celibate only to thoſe who were able to receive it; but the Roman Church will force all in Orders to receive it whether they can or not. And though S. *Paul* makes it one of the Characters of a perſon fit to be a Biſhop, that he has been married and educated his children well (which I ſhall not ſtretch ſo far as either the *Greek* or the *Ruſſian* Churches do now) and does not at all command him to abandon her, and has elſewhere condemned that in all perſons without exception, *except it be for a time in order to faſting and prayer*, and conform to this the primitive Church did not require the Clergy to abandon their wives, but on the contrary did condemn ſuch as did: yet the RomanChurch has moſt tyrannically impoſed this on all the Clergy. And although we read that God will judge Whoremongers and Adulterers, but no where that he will judge the Married; yet they have been very gentle to theſe crying ſcandals which continue to this day, and have allowed the Concubinate when they condemned the Marriage of the Clergy. By which they ſhew they prefer the Traditions of men to the Command of God. And thus far I have examined this Branch of the parallel *J. K.* makes between the Roman and the Chriſtian Religion, wherein I have been longer than I intended, but as ſhort as the particulars he named did allow. When he brings the reſt of his *&c.* I doubt

1 *Cor.* 7. 4, 5.

doubt not it ſhall appear they are a ſequel of ſuch things which the ſame or the like conſiderations will clear.

But I muſt follow his next ſtep, that the Roman Religion hath been propagated over a great part of the world without the help of Arms or humane enticements, by ſtrangers who converted many from Paganiſm (that allowed liberty) to their Religion, that teaches Severities and Mortification.

To all which I reply, That ſince the Roman Church is ſtill Chriſtian, I deny not but God may bleſs the honeſt endeavours of a great many of that Communion, ſo that their labours may have great ſucceſs on Infidels in converting them to Chriſtianity; herein God bleſſing them as he did the Hebrew Midwives whole charitable tender hearts God rewarded, building them Houſes, paſſing over their lie. But *J. K.* muſt not inſiſt on this as a good Argument, otherways he will be driven into great abſurdities.

Did not the *Arrians* by *Ulphilas* his means who was a ſtranger to the *Goths* (that were a barbarous cruel and yet vaſtly numerous people) convert them both to Chriſtianity and Arrianiſm at once? From whence we find the whole Roman Empire very ſoon overrun by Arrianiſm upon the Incurſion of the *Goths*, *Vandals*,

and *Longobards*. *Philoſtorgius* does alſo inform us that *Theophilus* an *Arrian* converted the *Indians* to the Chriſtian Faith. Did not the Greek Church when it was broke from the Roman, convert many Nations, the *Bulgars*, the *Muſcovites* and many other northern Kingdoms?

In fine, what will *J. K.* anſwer according to his own Argument to the great progreſs of the Doctrine of *Luther* and *Zuinglius*, who notwithſtanding all the oppoſition they met, and all the perſecutions their followers ſuffered, yet did ſo ſtrangely propagate their Doctrine, that before half an Age went about, the greater half of the Roman Church fell off from the Obedience of that See, to their Doctrine which holds all the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion, and there was no need of more, and inſtead of all the Juglings the Roman Prieſts had brought in, teaching men an eaſie way to Heaven, did preach all the ſeverities of a holy Life which our Saviour and his Apoſtles taught? And as they taught a ſeverer courſe of Life to all Chriſtians (I do not ſpeak of the particular ſeverities of ſome Orders in the Roman Church, but what muſt be the neceſſary conditions upon which all may hope for Salvation) ſo they advanced this without Arms, and under great Perſecutions. And here *J. K.* muſt think how he will anſwer his own Dilemma, That either this was done with Miracles, or without them:

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if with them, the Doctrine must be true that was confirmed by Miracles; if without them, that propagation was a great Miracle: and thus *J. K.* will find it hard to avoid the dint of his own Argument.

Besides when *J. K.* speaks of the propagation of the Roman Religion, he must not prove that from the propagation of Christianity by persons of that Religion, though the same Instruments might at the same time have engaged their new Converts to the particular conceits of that Church. For (as it was observed before) God blessing the sincerity of their Labours so that they made Converts to the Christian Doctrine, that has so much to be said for it that it is a wonder all the world did not receive it, it was not strange if those so converted seeing the foundation of the Divine Mission of *Jesus Christ* to be true, did either in humble gratitude to their charitable Instructors pay them all the returns of acknowledgment and Obedience, or being ignorant of that Doctrine which was wholly new to them, did easily receive and imbibe any particular Opinions they might infuse in them, and so at the same time became Votaries to *Christ* and to *Rome*.

But if *J. K.* will deal fairly and satisfyingly, he must shew us how their Religion, as it is distinct from the commonly received truths of Christianity, was so miraculously propagated,

and that in the points which we chiefly challenge, as the Supremacy of the Bishop of *Rome*, with his being the Universal Bishop of the Church, the forbidding the use of the Scripture to the Laicks, and the Worship in an unknown tongue, the use of Images in the Worship of God, the Invocating of Saints and Angels, the belief of Transubstantiation, the Sacrifice of the Mass and the taking the Chalice from the people, the belief of Purgatory, the Treasure of the Church and Indulgences, with a long *&c.* *J. K.* knows well that many have given very particular and full Histories of the rise and progress of these abuses with which we charge the Roman Church, and for which she having obstinately refused to reform them, on the contrary binding them on the Consciences of all with new and heavier Anathema's, we have separated our selves from her Communion. That those are not in the Scripture it is plain enough, and we will not decline a tryal upon all hazards by the verdict of the first four Ages.

It is true, in the fifth Century the Incursion of the *Goths* and *Vandals* did very much change the face of things, and bring on a black night of ignorance on the greater part of Christendom, which made way for gross Superstition, and the bold pretences of the Bishops of *Rome*: And *J. K.* is very much out in his accounts, that says the propagation of the Roman Religion was without Arms. Was not that dearest

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part of it, the authority of the Popes, the occasion of many long and bloody wars in *Germany* and *Italy*? And for their conversion of Hereticks, the third Decree of the Council of *Lateran*, and the practises of the Inquisitions were the surest means of effectuating it. And what humane enticements were wanting to draw men into their Religion? The cherishing of such Kings as were firm to them, and the making over to them the Rights of their Neighbouring *Princes*, were pretty enticing baits. Witness their getting *Pipin* into the Throne of *France*, their inviting him and his Son to the Conquest of the *Lombards*, with many other Instances. And was there ever found out such an enticement for men of carnal tempers, who yet retained some belief of Religion, as the power of pardoning, indulging and exchanging of penances? So that this whole account of *J. K.*'s fails him when put to the issue of a severe tryal, though it looked pretty smooth and fair to an overly considerer. But in end I will add a few considerations of the methods of the first propagation of Christianity, and from these it will appear how different those were from any thing the Roman Church can pretend to.

First, the Propagators of Christianity went witnessing the truth of what was publickly seen and known without any other design of their own, either to engross power or riches. Now

whether this be the method of the Roman Church I refer it even to their own Hiſtories, if their great care hath not always been to get Ambaſſadors ſent to *Rome* with the offer of their obedience and great ſubmiſſions, of which nothing appears in the firſt converſion of the world to Chriſtianity.

Secondly, the firſt Converters of the world ſtudied to draw Mankind to a great acknowledgement of the ineſtimable Bleſſings we received by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to the making ſuitable returns by addreſſing our ſelves to the Father by him and living according to his Goſpel. Now the greateſt care of moſt of the Apoſtles of the Roman Church was to propagate the worſhip of Creatures, to give Patrons to whole Nations, and teach them to build Churches to thoſe, and above all to the bleſſed Virgin, of which no footſteps appear in the firſt Converſion to Chriſtianity: And inſtead of the ſtrictneſs of a holy life and an humble charitable temper, they have ſet up a vaſt multitude of little obſervances, which may be received, and yet the life of ſin remain ſtill ſtrong and in vigour.

Thirdly, the firſt Propagators of Chriſtianity ſtudied by all poſſible means to wean people from all kind of Idolatry, and to make them ſerve the living God, and worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth. Now how far the

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Roman Church hath declined from this is apparent, and that they have ſtudied rather to change than overthrow their Idolatry, giving them little Pictures, Medals and *Agnus Dei's* and Reliques for their worſhip.

Fourthly, thoſe that laboured firſt to convert the world to the Chriſtian Religion ſtudied to make all underſtand what they taught them, gave them the Scriptures in their own tongue, and forms of Worſhip which they underſtood and could well make uſe of: But the Emiſſaries of *Rome* deny their Converts theſe helps, and ſo would hood them into a blind receiving of all they ſhall propoſe to them, and keep them ſtill under their Authority, and ſo teach them Prayers in a tongue they do not underſtand.

Fifthly, thoſe that firſt converted the world did by many Miracles wrought in the ſight of all convince and convert them to the Faith, and theſe Miracles were grave uſeful actions, as the curing of diſeaſes, the caſting out of devils, the procuring them good ſeaſons and other temporal bleſſings, and all this was done in the name and to the honour of Jeſus Chriſt. But the Roman Agents wanting theſe real Miracles have betaken themſelves to the ſhameful forgeries of ſtrange Viſions and Apparitions, and of ridiculous Miracles, with ſo vaſt a ſuperfetation of them, that few even of their own Com-

munion can read these Legends of their grand Apostles without a just disdain at such palpable impostures.

Sixthly, the first propagation of Christianity was when there was no Secular power to support it or those who laboured in it; so that they exposed themselves to all the dangers of hunger and cold, of scorn and reproach; being assured of no supply nor assistance from men: and yet God appeared so extraordinarily with them, that their success was plainly the work of Heaven. But the Bishops of *Rome* becoming great Princes, sent out Agents to make new Conquests well furnished and powerfully supported, so that they went like Ambassadors from one Prince to another to treat an Alliance, wherein there was little hazard and great hope of success by the advantageous terms were offered on both sides. And therefore after *Charles* the great had conquered *Germany*, and was become a terror to the Northern Kings, the Bishops of *Rome* sent their Agents to labour in their Conversion, which was an easie matter and had no difficulty in it.

And Seventhly, the first Conversion of the world to Christianity was signally the finger of God; since though it met with the greatest Opposition from the Secular powers and was persecuted every where and for many Ages, yet it prevailed: and though the first Converts were

were poor mechanical and ſimple perſons, yet great wiſdom and conſtancy appeared in them, to the amazement of the Philoſophers and other perſons of Eminence and Authority. But this hath not been the method of the Roman Converſions which begun in a kind of Alliance with the Prince, who being convinced of his advantage in the Change did upon that oblige his ſubjects to it, not without ſeverely puniſhing ſometimes ſuch as refuſed it; ſo far were they from being perſecuted for it. If any one were by a fury or tumult killed, that does not alter the caſe nor make it a perſecution.

And thus it is apparent that for all the noiſe the Roman Church makes of their Converſions, they have managed them in a method very different from the way of the primitive Chriſtians. How baſely and barbarouſly it hath been carried on in the Weſt *Indies* the Biſhop of *Guatimala* did inform the world; and the Biſhop of *Angelopolis* did within theſe few years inform the Pope how wretchedly the Jeſuits continue to manage it to this day. And though we have little reaſon to believe the accounts given us from the *Indies*, ſince we ſee thoſe who publiſh them are guilty of ſuch Impoſtures in things nearer us and eaſily diſcovered, that we have no reaſon to credit them in things at ſo great a diſtance where the forgeries of their account cannot be found out; yet even from theſe a great many of the obſervations

vations made upon the methods of the Emiſſaries of the Roman Church may be proved.

But as for *Auſtin* the Monk *J. K.* cannot ſure be ſo ignorant as to think we owe our Converſion to him; for whatever truth may be in the ſtory of *Glaſtenbury*, it is undoubted we received the Faith at fartheſt in the ſecond Century; and that it did overrun our Iſland farther than the Roman Conqueſt *Tertullian* witneſſes. The Rites of our obſerving *Eaſter* do alſo prove we had not the Chriſtian Faith by any ſent from *Rome*; ſo that long before the time of *Auſtin* the Monk this Iſland was converted. And that famed ſtory of the Monks of *Bangor* as it proves what footing Chriſtianity had then, ſo it ſhews how proud and inſolently cruel that pretended Apoſtle was. And it is apparent he was a man of an Ambitious temper, his great deſign on thoſe of *Bangor* being to engage them to a ſubjection to the Pope and to comply with their Rites in the obſervation of *Eaſter*. But if what is delivered by ancient Hiſtorians of his ſetting on the King of the *Northumberlands* to deſtroy theſe Monks be true, he is to be looked on as an Emiſſary of Hell rather than an Apoſtle of Chriſt. Beſides, the King of *Kent* to whom he came was ſo favourable to the Chriſtian Faith, that as he had married a Chriſtian Queen, ſo he allowed the Chriſtians a Church near *Canterbury*. And ſo it is no wonder if a Prince ſo prepared was

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ſoon prevailed on. But *Auſtins* firſt coming to him with all that pomp of Croſſes carried before him, has nothing primitive in it, and the fabulous Legends of the Monks are little to be credited.

Thus far I have examined *J. K's* proofs for the truth of the Roman Religion; and I doubt not upon a ſober review of what hath been ſaid, he himſelf will acknowledge he muſt ſee for other and better Arguments, before he can oblige any to believe the Roman Religion to be the true Catholick and Apoſtolical Religion.

CHAP.

CHAP VI.

It is conſidered if J. K. *proves convincingly that every thing the Roman Church teaches as an Article of Faith, muſt be true.*

J. K. advances to his laſt attempt which is the finiſhing of the whole contrivance to perſwade the belief of every thing the Roman Church delivers as an Article of Faith; for *if that Religion be a true Religion, then it is free from all fundamental errors, and does erre againſt no fundamental point of Religion: and if that be acknowledged, then it does not erre againſt this point that God is not the Author of any error or corruption whatſoever, that being unqueſtionably a fundamental point. Now if the Roman Religion does not erre againſt this, it does not teach that God is the Author of any error or corruption; and if it do not that, then it teaches nothing as an Article of Faith which is either error or corruption: for whatever it teaches as an Article of Faith, is teaches as that which hath been delivered by God. This then may be applied to every particular Article of Faith which the Roman Church teaceth; for if that be either error or corruption, it teaching God to be the Author of it, makes him to be the Author*

of error or corruption, which is to erre againſt a fundamental point, and by conſequence that Religion ſhall be no true Religion.

If by true Religion *J. K.* underſtands a Religion that has no mixture of error or corruption in it, then it is needleſs to prove that if the Roman Religion be true it hath neither error or corruption in it; for the proving it a true Religion muſt carry the other along with it. But if by true Religion be only meant a Religion that holds all the fundamentals of Chriſtianity, ſo that Salvation may be had in its Communion; then it is a moſt wretched Inference that it muſt be true in all its definitions of Faith. And to confute this I ſhall for once turn the Tables on *J. K.* and become an Advocate for the Roman Church, to ſhew they may be ſtill a true Church and a true Religion, though they have a large mixture of errors and corruptions. And this I do not ſo much out of love to them, but from a general principle of charity to overthrow this unmerciful Opinion that damns all men, as erring fundamentally, for believing any error in a matter of Faith.

And let me firſt ask *J. K.* whether he takes the Church of *Corinth* to have had a true Religion when S. *Paul* wrote to it? This ſure he cannot deny if he read but S. *Pauls* firſt ſalutation; and yet in that Church there were various parties, ſome for *Cephas*, ſome for *Apollo*,

Apollo, ſome for *Paul* and ſome for *Chriſt*, and great difference of opinion there was whether *Moſes* Law did oblige or not. Now theſe queſtions concerning Circumciſion and the Law were matters of Faith, and in all contradictory opinions one muſt be true, another falſe; thoſe therefore that were of the falſe ſide muſt by *J. K's* doctrine be all irrecoverably loſt, as being in a fundamental error, for each ſide believed his Opinion was of God. But S. *Paul* taught another doctrine, that whoſo builds on the foundation Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall be ſaved, though he build upon it wood, hay and ſtubble. And the diſtinction he there makes between thoſe who build Gold, Silver and precious ſtones, and wood, hay and ſtubble, can only relate to ſound and unſound Doctors, the one building good and uſeful Superſtructures upon the foundation, the other teaching trifling Doctrines that will not bear the Tryal; and yet that both may be ſaved, is a plain demonſtration againſt *J. K.*

The ſame Apoſtle alſo tells us that neither Circumciſion nor uncircumciſion availed any thing, and that in the new Creature there was neither Circumciſion nor uncircumciſion but Chriſt was all in all, and that one God did both juſtifie the Circumciſion by Faith and the uncircumciſion through Faith; from all which it is evident that thoſe of the Circumciſion might be ſaved, and by conſequence that their Reli-

Religion was a true Religion; and yet that their doctrine of Circumcision was an error, can be disputed by none who read the Epistles of S. *Paul*; And it is no less clear that they held it an Article of Faith delivered to *Abraham* by God. So here it is plain that S. *Paul* in one breath both condemns this Opinion as erroneous, and yet allows Salvation to such as believed it. With how many errors doth S. *John* charge some of the seven Churches? yet they were still the Churches of Christ.

The Church in the second Century did generally believe the *Millennium* as a thing revealed by God, which the Roman Church now calls an error; yet I hope *J. K.* will not condemn that Church as holding a false Religion. The *African* Churches held it necessary for Infants to receive the Eucharist, from these words, *Except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, you have no life in you*, and this was approved by P. *Innocent*, and was continued many Ages in the Roman Church, as appears from the *Ordo Romanus*, and yet that Church has declared that not to be necessary, by which the Opinion the former Ages had of its necessity is declared an error: But it were a strange thing from that to condemn these as holding a false Religion. The *Franciscans*, and *Dominicans* had hot contests about the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and both pretended Divine authority and Revelations, so

that

that one of those must have held an error. The *Dominicans* and *Janseniſts* believe Predeſtination and Grace efficacious of it ſelf, this the *Moliniſts* deny; both vouch Scriptures and the definitions of the Church. The *Canoniſts* Courtiers of *Rome* and *Jeſuits* have aſſerted the Popes Infallibility from Scripture and Councils, the *Sorbon* hath always rejected this. Now of all theſe different Opinions the one muſt be true and the other falſe, ſince they ſtand in the terms of a contradiction; and they have all vouched God and Scriptures for them: therefore thoſe who hold the falſe ſide of the contradiction according to *J. K*'s reaſoning muſt be of a falſe Religion; which I believe when he conſiders more maturely, he will find he miſtook his meaſures in this.

And in fine, his Argument will alſo hold as ſtrong to prove that every Individual of a true Religion muſt be exempt from all errors in every Opinion whereof he takes God to be the Author; For *J. K*'s Argument will be as ſtrong for every thing whereof God is believed the Author, as for Articles of Faith. So that every miſtaken ſenſe of Scripture will turn one to be of a falſe Religion, ſince every miſtaken expoſition is an error; and yet that being thought the meaning of the place, God is believed the author of that meaning. and by *J. K*'s conſequence of the error it ſelf. From all which I may (I hope even by *J. K*'s leave)

infer the neceſſary diſtinction between things that are believed to be errors, and thoſe that are believed to be Truths. For the former, to vouch God the Author of what we know to be an error and corruption, is certainly ſo criminal that none of the true Religion can be guilty of it. But there be many things which (though errors, yet) any one may very innocently miſtake for truths. I do not ſay the miſtake does quite excuſe the error; if the error be fundamental the miſtake muſt be ſo too: But if the error be in a leſſer matter, it is a leſſer error; and it will never be made out, That, if one apprehending an Opinion true, embrace it, as come from God, and as an Article of Faith, if he is miſtaken, in that he ſtrikes at the divine veracity: for among men, who thinks that any wronged his veracity if another miſtook his meaning, and underſtood his words in a different ſenſe from what he intended and expreſſed? Certainly he who ſo miſtakes, after the true meaning is cleared, cannot be underſtood to have faſtned any reproach upon the Candor of him whoſe words he miſtook, all the blame being to be caſt only on his want of right underſtanding. This were indeed a hard caſe if all our miſtakings of divine Revelations did infer a charging God with error or corruption. But the thing is ſo clear that I am afraid I have ſpent too many words about it, and this Argument of *J. K*'s cannot but upon firſt reading appear to all that are accuſtomed

to

to weigh and examine truth, to be a piece of crude ill digested and ill palliated Sophistry.

Thus far have I followed *J. K.* through those six points he imagines he has demonstrated, and have shewed how true the first four were, but how little reason there was to account them such for any thing he said for their proof, and how false the other two are. And I suppose he will acknowledge that if what is already set down hold true and be founded on good reason, I need not follow him through the rest of his Book, it being only a direction to his gentle courteous Reader how to manage this method of arguing so as to convince all persons that dissent from the true Religion, which he thinks is a Mathematical and sure way of proceeding, and such as no man can decline or avoid, and in end must be either convinced by it, or be forced to confess himself no better than an Ass or a block, which concludes him a mad man. I will not follow this with a railery that is as obvious as severe; but I love not to mix matters of sport with such serious purposes: therefore I follow *J. K.* no more through the rest of his Book.

But come next to consider the great support of that cause which he manages both in his Preface and through the rest of his Book, that there can be no certainty neither about the true books of Scripture, the Decrees of Coun-

cils or writings of Fathers, without there be a true Church and Religion agreed on, which ſhall both declare to us what Books are true and what not, and ſhall deliver their true meaning to us: otherwiſe endleſs confuſions muſt follow, which plainly appears in the many diviſions of the Proteſtants and the uncertainties they are in about all Controverted points. From which the neceſſity of a true Church appears, as much as in a well ordered State there is not only a neceſſity of clear and good Laws, but of Judges to expound them.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of the ſuppoſed Inconveniencies J. K. *imagines in the want of a true Church to Judge Infallibly, and of the right methods of finding Truth.*

THere is nothing about which thoſe of the Roman Church make more noiſe than the neceſſity of an Infallible Judge, and of the great and viſible inconveniencies that appear from the want of it in thoſe Churches that have departed from the Roman Communion. I have not long ago propoſed a great many Queries to one of *J. K*'s brethren, in which I have ſet before him, the many difficulties they muſt needs be involved in by clearing who this Infallible Judge muſt be; and I ſhall here repeat nothing of what I ſaid then, but ſhall go on to ſhew upon what clear and certain grounds we may reſt our perſwaſions about Articles of Faith and divine Truths.

All Arts and Sciences muſt be acquired by ſome rules and methods by which a progreſs may be made from plainer things to thoſe that are more involved and difficult; and if any would deſire to underſtand any Theorem or Problem in Geometry without beginning at

the Elements and advancing by *Euclid* or ſome other ſuch methods, he labours in vain: So alſo if any would without more ado ſtudy to know a ſecret in Chymiſtry having neither learned to know the terms of Art nor the courſe of a proceſs, he ſhall not be the wiſer though one deliver him their beſt ſecrets. In like manner if a man will enter into the knowledge of Divine truth without any of thoſe preparations which are neceſſary, he is in a wrong way; and the further he engages, he is the more out of the way; nor can he be ever in the right way till he begin afreſh.

It may juſtly ſeem ſtrange that Chriſtian Religion was ſo plain a thing when the Apoſtles firſt delivered it; that mean ſimple people, poor women, and an illiterate company ſhould have underſtood it, and that it ſubdued a great part of the Roman Empire, before men of great Learning were Converted to the belief of it: and all the knowledge they then had of it was by the Sermons and Epiſtles of the holy Apoſtles which remain to this day. And though at this diſtance from that time, we may have loſt the true meaning of ſome phraſes, and we have not ſo particular a Hiſtory of the ſtate of the firſt Churches as might help us to underſtand many paſſages that ſeem very dark to us: yet for the main of thoſe Books they ſeem very eaſie and plain. We have alſo ſtill ſo perfect a knowledge of the Greek tongue as clearly to under-

underſtand them. But after all this, Chriſtian Religion is now become ſuch a ſtrange kind of ſecret, that men with all their Learning and Study can ſcarce underſtand it. Certainly we muſt have either changed Religion from what it was at firſt, ſo that it hath now put on a new face; or we are much miſtaken in our methods of enquiring into it, and examining what things are revealed to us by God.

S. *Paul* tells us, *the Natural man receives not the things of God, neither indeed can he for they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* From which it appears that a Renovation of the mind from its natural mould, and its being transformed into a ſpiritual temper are neceſſary, as well for the underſtanding and diſcerning, as the obeying the things of God. Now all natural men may be divided into three Claſſes; either they are ſo immerſed in ſenſes and ſenſible things, that all their apprehenſions are tinctured with the figures and phantaſms which their ſenſes and imaginations preſent to them, or they riſe a little above this, but are ſo governed by the heats of nature and paſſion, that either their minds are rendred quite incapable of all ſerious thoughts, or ſo diſtorted in them that they do not diſcern them truly. But the higheſt elevation of the natural man is Reaſon, which hath a fairer appearance, and if rightly managed would certainly advance him to a ſpiritual temper: but being fed only with dry Notions and

trying them by a falſe touchſtone, does ſtrenghthen our errors, fortifie our prejudices and ſwell us with pride, and fret us with the itch of an unſatisfiable and uſeleſs curioſity.

Now it will not be ungrateful, it is hoped, to propoſe the great hinderances all theſe ſeveral Modifications of the Natural man have given to the right underſtanding Divine truths, and to begin with thoſe of the loweſt form.

One whoſe mind is immerſed in ſenſe, either believes nothing but what his ſenſes propoſe to him, or at leaſt tinctures all his Notions with ſenſible objects. Thus the Atheiſt believes no God, becauſe he cannot ſee him; and thoſe of the heathens over whom the power of their ſenſes was ſtrong, yet not ſuch as to overcome the Impreſſions of a Deity left on their Souls, did believe the Sun, Moon and Stars were Gods, being both dazled with the brighter ſplendor of the day and delighted with the fainter ſhinings of the night. And finding both the pleaſant Lightſomneſs, the warm Benignity and fruitful uſefulneſs of their Beams, they did adore them as gods, and ſeeing ſtrange effects anſwering ſome of their poſitions and aſpects, they came to imagine all humane things were governed by them, and ſo framed an entire Theory (if ſo ill grounded a thing can deſerve that name) of Aſtrology. Others much taken with the greatneſs and glory of brave Commanders

ders and Princes, and having ſome Notion of the Souls Immortality on their minds, did think that after their death they governed this inferiour world; and to thoſe Heroes they aſſigned Stars to dwell in, and thoſe gods they repreſented either by ſome Symbols, the chief whereof was Fire, or by ſome Statues, Pillars or other pieces of Sculpture, which at leaſt repreſented that Deity to their Senſes, if it had not ſome ſtrangely Magical and Divine influence united or affixed to it. They did alſo prognoſticate all future things either by the flight or feeding of Birds, or by the inwards of Animals.

Here then a Religion entirely framed from the Conceptions of the Natural man, in its loweſt depreſſion; and their groſs Notions of Religion made them both prejudiced againſt the *Jews* who worſhipped nothing but a Celeſtial Deity, and more againſt the Chriſtians whom they called Atheiſts becauſe they had none of thoſe ſenſible repreſentations or ways of Worſhip, but their Faith was plain and ſimple.

But as the Natural man did thus corrupt the notices of natural Religion, it did no leſs embaſe the Chriſtian Religion. When many natural men were engaged in the profeſſion of it, either by *Education*, Cuſtom or Intereſt, who loathing its ſimple purity did ſtudy ſo to dreſs it up that it might gratifie their natural minds by bringing in the worſhip of deceaſed men, and by

by worſhipping them by Images, Pictures, Reliques, and at length making Pictures for the Deity it ſelf, and by dreſſing up all the parts of Religious Worſhip ſo as to amuſe and delight the ſenſes, by affecting an outward grandeur in Proceſſions and other Feſtivals, and in the greatneſs of their Prieſts, chiefly of their high Prieſt: all which were viſibly the effects of minds deeply engaged in ſenſible things, to whom nothing appeared ſacred or ſolemn without it had been adorned with all the exquiſite deckings of Art and Induſtry; and judging of piety by ſome heats which were raiſed in the fancy by outward objects preſented to it, ſtudied to fill all the parts of Worſhip with ſuch rites as might make either a glorious ſhew for amuſing the worſhippers, or ſome melting tender impreſſions for cozening them into an opinion of their being divinely elevated.

But after that by the bleſſed providence of God Religion was in many parts of the world refined from that droſs, yet the ſenſitive part of the natural man did not give over its attempts for embaſing Religion; many ſtill continued to place all their Religion in forms, and beſtowed that Zeal which ſhould have gone to the advancing true piety, holineſs of life and Brotherly Charity, to the adorning and maintaining thoſe. Others thought they had pretty well eſcaped this whole danger, being got into an extream very oppoſite to it of vilifying all forms;

forms; but the Natural man did act in their ſenſitive powers though in another method: for though they had emerged out of the Dominion or Influence of their outward ſenſes in matters of Religion, yet their inward ſenſes and imaginations, (which are the rebound of ſenſible impreſſions upon the underſtanding) prevailed much on them. Theſe therefore came to think a voluble way of pouring out ſoft words with great heavings of the natural mind, was a mighty thing, and gave themſelves wholly to this, ſo that the conceiving and hearing long Prayers and Sermons, eſpecially if accompanied with tenderneſs in the thoughts and great meltings in the fancy, was thought the higheſt feat and elevation of Religion: though it plainly appears to a man of a ſevere and diſcerning Reaſon, that all this is but an illuſion of the fancy heated by ſome fervours of the mind. And yet they upon theſe deceits of their fanciful thoughts have ſeparated themſelves from all regular forms of Worſhip, becauſe that gratification of new words was neceſſary to feed their devotion.

Another great miſchief of this diſtemper is, that ſuch perſons judge that as long as they enjoy theſe heats, all is as they would have it; and this will readily continue as long as they are put to do nothing diſpleaſing to them: ſo that whatever they do, be it never ſo contrary to the Laws of Religion; yet if with that they

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can but keep up these heats, they judge either that what they do, is not at all a sin, or at most such a sin as being a branch of necessary infirmity, may consist well enough with Grace, because it can live with those fervours; and if any thing quench them, (which it is like every thing that displeases them may do) then they throw it off as carnal. Thus they measure all things by these fluctuating and inconstant motions, and as that temper is volatile and of all others the most subject to change; so the inequalities they are in, are looked on as the flowings and ebbings of the divine Spirit; and the heats they feel sometimes being ascribed to the divine Spirit, every thought which drops into their minds when under these actuations is taken for a divine Revelation, and followed and given out for such; and the coldness and dulness which must of necessity follow these heats, is thought a withdrawing and desertion of the divine Spirit. Whence follow sad melancholy and perplexing scrupulosities, which do often mightily afflict some devout but weak minds, and bring up an ill report on Religion, as if it were sullen and morose, and led men into dejection, and perpetual anxiety. And this humor as it swells up the mind into a mighty conceit of its own eminent and exalted piety and to a contempt of others, so it doth often carry on those who are imposed on by it, into strange conceits, making them apprehend they are obliged to nothing but as they are inwardly

moved

moved to it. And thus they would ſuperſede Reaſon and give themſelves up to their fancies under a conceit that they are acted by a divine Spirit; whereas it is but an impulſe of ſome vapours of the groſſer and more terrene parts of the natural man rarified by the heats of the Brain, and the fumes of Melancholy into a thin and nimble agitation.

The next power of the Natural man, is in his paſſions and appetites, which being ſuited to the contexture of his Bloud, Brain and Spirits, have a mighty influence on all his thoughts, and chiefly on thoſe that relate to Religion. And firſt theſe carrying him with a ſtrong impetus to many irregular deſires to which Religion if believed muſt give a ſtop, he is from that made firſt to queſtion, then to doubt, and at laſt to deny there is a God, becauſe his appetites are too dear to forgoe them for the belief of a ſuperiour power or the hopes of another ſtate. And it is an eaſie thing for any man to bribe his Reaſon to believe what he has a great mind to perſwade himſelf of, either by diverting his thoughts from ſeriouſly conſidering the thing propoſed, or by looking only at the oppoſitions may be made to this belief without examining what may be ſaid for it, and by living in a perpetual diſorder, which both darkens the mind and keeps out all ſerious thoughts from it; upon all which there may by the juſt judgment of God follow a ſearing of the Conſcience and a blinding of the mind.

But

But if the power of Religion and the witneſs God hath in our Breaſt, prove too hard for all this oppoſition, then the next attempt of paſſion and luſt is to miſshape theſe notices of truth into ſuch a figure as may beſt agree with their deſires. And thus the Heathens corrupted all the evidences of natural Religion, and ſet up ſuch Deities as were guilty of the moſt furious paſſions, and the moſt ungoverned luſts of all ſorts; and this being once done, no wonder the worſhip of thoſe gods was of a piece with the opinions they had of them, and that they deviſed ſuch Sacrifices and ſervices as might agree beſt with thoſe Deities. It was alſo a very natural reſult of this opinion that they ſhould conform their lives to their gods, and ſo they were ſecure of patrociny and protection when they were to commit the baſeſt villanies. And no wonder this prejudiced them at Chriſtianity which they ſaw taught all its Converts to be ſeverely vertuous and pious; and therefore they complained that Chriſtians came to diſgrace their gods, and to turn them from the Religion they had received from their Fathers.

But afterwards when the world ruſhed into the Church, the paſſionate and luſtful parts of the natural man finding nothing in that Faith for their ſhelter, yet ſtudied to doe the beſt they could for their own preſervation. Therefore

fore insensibly men were turned from minding the great things for which Christ died, and rose again to place all their care on other things which might well be maintained without overcoming a passion or mortifying a lust. Some did set up highly for opinions, others for forms, and by a curious improving those hoped that their other faults should be more easily forgiven, both by God and man. Afterwards a great many notions were found out, if not for a direct defence of those disorders, yet for palliating them, and allaying the grief for them. A devotion to Saints was one great Engine; the opinion of many sins being expiated in Purgatory, together with the belief of the Popes power of Redeeming from it, was an universal Medicine for all diseases of Conscience. Then the dispensing with Vowes, Covenants, and most of all Duties was a great ease to the natural man. There were also some new coined duties of Religion which did agree well with their passions, such as fighting for Religion against Infidels, Hereticks and others that were excommunicated by the Pope, and a violent persecuting of all, who in any point departed from the received Opinions: And their Auricular Confessions, easie Penances, and ready Absolutions were sure and Infallible means to reconcile them to Religion after it was so debased as to meet them more than half way.

But when a great part of *Europe* was delivered from thoſe more apparent Impoſtures, the natural man did not for all that give over his practiſing upon Religion to frame it to his own taſte; and a fondneſs on ſome reformed Opinions, with a Reverence for the Perſons of the Teachers, came to be ſet up by many as all they drave at. But cunninger Arts were alſo found out and ſome ſacred truths did inſenſibly become ſo abuſed as to be made the excuſes of ſins, eſpecially as they were ſtretched by the corruptions of men, which were much encouraged by many unwary expreſſions of ſome hot Divines, who in the eagerneſs of diſpute had ſaid many things that were not to be juſtified. Hence it was that the Doctrine of Chriſts dying for ſinners, and being their Sacrifice, by which the guilt of their ſins was expiated and they reconciled to God, was uſed by many for a ſecurity for men to ſin as pleaſed them, ſo they but truſted to Chriſt; and becauſe perfection was not attained in this life, it was held unattainable and ſin inſuperable. Nor could men be much afflicted for ſin nor guard diligently againſt it, who believed they were inevitably led and determined to it, eſpecially when that was thought done by God himſelf; and fighting for Religion againſt the ſupream Authority was alſo by many made a great demonſtration of their zeal for God and Religion, and a furious bitter zeal againſt all

who

who departed from their Opinions whether to the one hand or to the other, was looked on as a great evidence of Grace and Love to God. And it is plain in many persons Religion does not so much mortifie their passions and lusts as palliate and disguise them, or at most change their object but not their nature. Men of Cholerick dispositions placing all Religion in an eager, violent, yea and if need be, a bloody maintaining all their Opinions about matters of Faith. The melancholy men put it all in abstraction and recluseness, valuing themselves much upon it, and undervaluing others that were not so retired. Others of a more sanguine Complexion finding either great excuses for all their levities and follies, or if more serious, turning all their thoughts to the dressing up some pretty Notions. And thus men not forming their minds by the dictates and precepts of Religion, but framing it according to their own tempers, so as might best suit their inclinations, did hold the truth in unrighteousness. And thus again the natural man did adulterate the notions of Religion which are spiritually discerned.

But the last and greatest (because both strongest and subtilest) assault that Nature made upon Religion was by the misguidings of ill directed and ill managed Reason. The former prejudices were more visible and could not be so well defended; but this was managed with a

deeper cunning. And first the great value that the Masters and pretenders to Learning and Reason had of themselves, made them scornfully reject all Instruction, stiffly maintain all they had once asserted, and despise every one that differed from them. Hence it was that the Philosophers broke into so many divisions, being as is apparent mightily swelled in self-conceit, so that they scorned to yield to one another, but employed all their wit and eloquence to justifie their own Notions, how absurd soever. Now this is the temper in the world the most incapable of instruction; and this their pride they carried higher, laughing at all Inspiration as a kind of madness, which therefore they despised and thought that their Reason was able to penetrate into the deepest and secretest mysteries. And as this occasioned a numberless variety of opinions, so it made them despise the first preachings of Christianity, in which as there was none of their Metaphysical canting; so poor illiterate men delivering it, they who valued themselves on their Learning and their noble generous tempers, rejected it with scorn, which was fed with the contempt they had for the first Converts, who were either such as they called Barbarians, or men of mean Education and Employments.

But after an Age or two many of those were by the prevailing progress of Christianity Converted to the Faith, and did for some Ages very

very good ſervice to it. But diverſe of their Succeſſors retaining the old temper of the Philoſophers, the debates about Religion begun to be managed with an unyielding ambition, and Anathema's were the common ſanctions with which they impoſed their Opinions. And at length one of the Biſhops aſſumed to himſelf and Succeſſors the abſolute authority of judging and deciding all Controverſies, which (though the moſt unreaſonable opinion in the world, and that which deſtroys the free and right uſe of Reaſon: yet) was brought in on the higheſt pretences of Reaſon, as the only mean to end all diſputes.

And when a great many errors were viſibly got into their Church, and ſome roſe who with all the evidence of Reaſon imaginable laid open theſe and preſſed them to diſown and reform them, they continued in their ſtubborneſs, multiplied their Anathema's, and wreathed all their errors in one Chain, as S. *James* had done the Law of God, and impoſed all without mercy. And for doing this they brought their Janizaries, whom they had educated in Nurſeries at fencing, cudgelling, and the other diſcipline of Pen-ſlaughter and Ink-ſhed. Theſe Schoolmen who had been well trained to diſpute about every thing, and ſtubbornly to maintain every poſition how trifling or how falſe ſoever with all confidence and earneſtneſs, were brought to give Battel, and they as Mercenaries who

expected good preferments did fight it out most obstinately; nothing was too disingenious for their confidence, no Author was so spurious but they would vouch his testimony, no place of Scripture sounded favourably to their Opinions but (though it had been never so plain that it was to be understood in a different sence) was brought as a certain proof, no maxim of the Schools, no old fustian distinction was left out to maintain the Fight; and as some after the greatest defeats have impudence enough to pretend a Victory, so that art was not omitted by them, but loud acclamations of Victory were made, when all free discerners saw they were quite routed; and the rudeness they had learned in their Cells was brought out with them, for they managed their disputes with all the roughness of expression, the most petulant insultings and the most barbarous railings.

Nor does this charge fall only on one side of Christendom, though one Church be most notoriously guilty; but the Disputants of all sides have for the greatest part managed their debates with that acrimony of stile, those severe invectives and the catching up some escapes of inconsiderate Pens, as if they were more concerned for Glory than for Truth. Besides that every one swallows down an entire system of that party to which he hath offered up himself; and all must be defended without that ingenuity which becomes inquirers into divine truth.

truth. Nor do moſt men take their opinions from the ſacred Oracles, but from their Educations, and the Catechiſms and Confeſſions they have been accuſtomed to; and being thus prepoſſeſſed go to the Scriptures to ſeek proofs for their opinions, being reſolved beforehand to defend them and to make the Scriptures ſerve their turns; which if they will not do eaſily, they will ſo ſtretch them upon the rack by their forced Criticiſms or conſequences, as to make them confeſs any thing though never ſo plainly contrary to the clear meaning of the words. And it is evident that men thus blown up with pride are reſolved to juſtifie all they have ever ſaid, though to the coſt of throwing off all candid and fair dealing, ſaying things that no man of common ſenſe would ſay if he were not ſtrangely byaſſed. And indeed we dayly ſee things brought for the proof of many opinions which are ſo viſibly weak and unconcluding, that it is ſcarce poſſible to think thoſe believed them that ſaid them; but that being reſolved to ſtand to what they once aſſerted, ſome miſt muſt be raiſed for keeping up their reputation, and impoſing on weaker and more credulous Diſciples. And thus it muſt continue as long as men are led by their pride to be ſtubborn in all their reaſonings about Religion.

Another great abuſe of Reaſon is a needleſs curioſity about things that either are of no

great importance, or are wrapped in myſterious darkneſs; into which if men will penetrate, their Conjectures and Diſcourſes muſt turn to impertinent Cantings and Nonſenſe. Thus the Philoſophers diſputing about the nature of the Deity and of the Soul, do fall into unintelligible niceties and Cabaliſtical conceits of Numbers, of which no account can be given, but that they would ſeem to ſay ſomewhat where they could ſay nothing. And this curious ſubtiliſing carried along another miſchief with it, that they rejected every thing of which they could not give a diſtinct account, and therefore called S. *Paul* a babler when he told them of the Reſurrection.

But when ſome of the Philoſophers became Converts to Chriſtianity, both theſe effects of this curioſity did appear; ſome ſtudying to make out the high Myſteries of the Faith from their Metaphyſicks, and to reconcile them to the Platonical Notions, in which any diſcerning Reader will ſee a great deal of needleſs and very ill proved and worſe applyed curioſity. This appearing both too curious and ill grounded to others, was no ſmall occaſion of their rejecting thoſe Myſteries, or at leaſt framing them ſo as to agree with their Conceptions of things; and both ſeem to have had too large a ſhare of this overſearching humour, and of not believing any thing but what was made out to their Reaſons: the one party pre-

pretending they did underſtand the Myſteries, and the other denying them becauſe they could not underſtand them.

What ſubtleties were uſed in explaining thoſe incomprehenſible doctrines any that hath converſed in thoſe writings muſt needs know, and how they were oppoſed with the like ſubtleties. Whereas had all ſides adored the divine Revelations without engaging into theſe diſcantings, they had held the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, and acted more like true Chriſtian Philoſophers; ſince it agrees with the ſtricteſt reaſon to acknowledge our faculties are limited, and ſo not fit to comprehend the divine Nature, nor the operations or the communications of that Supream being; and therefore we muſt believe with all humility what himſelf hath been pleaſed to reveal to us concerning himſelf, without either doubting the truth becauſe we underſtand not what is ſo far above us, or engaging into over curious ſearching into that which it appears from our limited underſtandings, and the general terms of Revelation God intended ſhould be ſtill a Myſtery to us. But indeed the Schoolmen have thought it below the height of their touring minds and great Learnings to ſtick at the explaining all Myſteries, and as far as hard words and unconceivable niceties will go, they have given us a very ſatisfying account of all Myſteries, by which we know neither more nor leſs than

we do without them. Whether this may not have led many over curious enquirers into the contrary extream, I shall not determine, but this is plainly an abuse of Reason on both hands.

The humour of enquiring into all subtleties did quickly bring into the Church a superfetation of unconceivable Mysteries. For every bold conceit that any (who had so much authority as to be well followed) took up was presently given out for a Mystery, and then it was sacred and must not be touched; and if any did offer to examine it, he was scared with the bugbear of a Mystery. So that Transubstantiation, the treasure of the Church, the way of the Popes Infallibility, together with a thousand deviled Mysteries in all the pieces of Divine Worship, were cramm'd down the throats of all Christians, and many being justly provoked by these pretended Mysteries, and seeing the other great Mysteries made the engines of obtruding these on the world, were thereupon by an unjustifiable and an immoderate use of the Counterpoise led to the other extream of denying all

And with how great nicety of Argument have even the Reformed managed many high mysterious points, as the derivation of *Adam*'s sin, the Order o the Divine decrees, with the nature of the aids and assistances of Grace, which

which have been canvaſſed with a very ſearching curioſity? and as dark as theſe muſt be confeſſed to be, yet they are delivered with as much dictating and imperious authority, as if theſe Authors had been caught up to the third Heavens. Many other niceties are alſo found out to exerciſe their curioſity; yet if it reſted there the hazard were not ſo great, but theſe are all made Articles of Faith, and all who are not ſatisfied about them, are barred the Communion of the Church, and ſo no wonder there be endleſs heats and debates.

The occaſion of this curioſity and itch of diſputing may be perhaps not unjuſtly derived from the contentions and endleſs wranglings of the Schools in matters of Philoſophy; in which men being accuſtomed to that game of diſputing and ſubtiliſing about nothing, and going from thoſe ſtudies to Divinity, and carrying that ſame temper, and fiery edge along with them, they made all that work about it which hath now ſo long divided the world. They being alſo by a long practice habituated to many Maxims and Axioms which were laid down for rules not to be enquired into or denyed, came really to believe thoſe were true, and to carry them along with them to all their Theological debates. All which will appear very evident to any that compares their Philoſophical and Theological works, from which many of their ſtrange inferences and poſitions did take their riſe,

riſe, and I am afraid do ſtill receive their nouriſhment.

Thus far I have diſcourſed of the ſeveral prejudices the powers of the natural man do lay in the way of our apprehending and judging aright of Divine truths; and the common notions of the moral Philoſophy will concur to teach all men that before their minds can be rightly qualified for the underſtanding any intellectual truth, but moſt chiefly Divine truth, we muſt abſtract from all thoſe figures of things, which our ſenſes preſent to us, and riſe above all groſſer phantaſms. It is no leſs neceſſary that our thoughts be ſerene, and free of paſſion, that we may freely and at leiſure conſider what lies before us, without the Byaſs of preconceived opinions or intereſts. And it is equally rational with theſe that we have modeſt minds not vainly puffed up with an opinion of our own knowledge, but tractable and docile, ſuch as will not ſtick after clear conviction, to confeſs and retract an error, and that we proceed in our reaſonings cloſely and on ſure grounds, not on vain conjectures and maxims taken up meerly on truſt, but by a clear progreſs advance from one truth to another as the Series of them ſhall lead.

A man who is thus prepared muſt next conſider all was ſaid in the firſt four Sections, with a great deal more to the ſame purpoſe; That he

he be on good grounds perſwaded there is a God; that there is a true revealed Religion, & that the Chriſtian Religion is the true Religion. Theſe things being laid down he is in the firſt place by earneſt Prayers to beg God's direction to go along with him in all his enquiries, which certainly will not be wanting if he bring with him a ſincere & well prepared mind, not byaſſed nor prepoſſeſſed; and of this we may be well aſſured both from the Divine goodneſs and veracity. For as he hath promiſed that whoſo ſeek ſhall find; ſo it is a neceſſary conſequent of infinite goodneſs to aſſiſt all that ſincerely ſeek after life and happineſs: but if any come to this ſtudy without he be duly prepared, he has himſelf to thank if he fall into errors and miſtakes.

The next thing an exact ſearcher into Religion muſt labour in, is once to obſerve the nature of Chriſtianity and the great deſigns of it; and in this he is not to follow the ſmall game of ſome particular and obſcure paſſages, but to obſerve through the whole New Teſtament what was the great end of all our Saviour ſpoke and did, and his diſciples teſtified and wrote. If once we comprehend this aright, it will be a thread to carry us through particular diſquiſitions. For as there be many natural truths of which we are well aſſured, though Philoſophy offers us ſome Arguments againſt them, in the anſwering which we are not

not able to satisfie our Reasons; so there may be some divine truths very certainly made out to us, and yet there may be places of Scripture which seem so to contradict those truths that they cannot be well answered.

Again, a serious Enquirer will see good reason to believe the Scriptures must be plain, evident and clear, since they were at first directed to men of very ordinary parts and of no profound understandings and learning; therefore he may well conclude those strange Superstructures some have reared up for amusing the world, can be none of the Articles of Faith necessary to be believed.

And as the first Converts were honest simple men, so our Saviour and the Apostles spoke in a plain easie stile, therefore all these forced Criticisms and Inferences by which some more ingenious than candid Writers would expound them in a sence favourable to their Opinions, are not to be received, since these do often represent the divine discourses rather like the little tricks of double-dealing and Sophistry for which an honest Tutor would severely chide his Pupil: words are to be understood in their plain meaning, and not as Logick or a nicety of Criticism may distort and throw them.

If then a man will in this method (which no honest man can except against) go to the search

ſearch of the Scriptures with a mind prepared, as hath been already ſaid, he cannot fail of finding out all that is neceſſary for his Salvation. Nor is he to be doubtfully anxious concerning the true Books; for none denies but the Churches care in all Ages hath been the great conveyance of this; the many various Tranſlations of all Ages and Languages (nay and different Religions) agreeing in all material points, and the Citations out of thoſe Books which we find in a Series of Authors who have lived in the ſeveral Ages ſince they were written agreeing likewiſe with the Books themſelves, together with many ancient Manuſcripts which do yet remain of a great many Languages, may abundantly ſatisfie even the moſt ſevere Inquirer, that theſe be the very Books which the Apoſtles delivered and were univerſally received by all Chriſtians.

The matter of Fact being thus cleared without any neceſſity of running to the authority of the Church, all thoſe ſcruples which *J. K.* with the reſt of his Brethren would needs raiſe, do vaniſh, ſince they never diſtinguiſh exactly between a Witneſs and a Judge. For the former nothing is required but honeſty and good information, and we have the agreeing ſuffrages of many witneſſes that do all agree in their Teſtimony of theſe Books, who though they differed very much in their Expoſitions

of

of them, yet concurred in their verdict about the Books, and were checks on one another in the faithful preſerving and tranſcribing them. In this ſence we do receive the Churches Teſtimony as the neceſſary means of conveying theſe Books to us. But an Authority Sacred and Solemnly declared is required in a Judge, and this no Church can ſo much as pretend to but from the Scriptures. Therefore the Scriptures being received as Divine cannot depend on the ſentence of the Church as a Judge, ſince all its Juriſdiction is derived from Scripture, which therefore muſt be acknowledged before it can be believed.

But becauſe there be perſons of a meaner Condition and not Educated ſo as to make all the inquiry which is neceſſary in ſo important a Buſineſs, there is therefore a ſhorter method for ſuch, which yet is as morally certain as any thing can be. Let then the ſimpleſt man in *England* provide himſelf of two New Teſtaments, one publiſhed by the Church of *England*, another by the Church of *Rome* as was that of *Rheims*: Now he knows well what animoſities be betwixt the Divines of theſe Churches, and that they are engaged ſo hotly one againſt another, that they agree in nothing, but where the Evidence of truth eſpecially in matters of Fact does bind them. And yet he comparing theſe New Teſtaments will find, that though the phraſe, the poſition

of

of words, and in ſome few places perhaps the ſence varies, but upon a ſurvey of the whole he finds that they do plainly agree in all matters of moment. So that from this he is perſwaded that both have the ſame true Book which the Apoſtles did deliver to the Church; and the *Jews* agreeing with us as to the Old Teſtament, is the ſame Evidence to him that we have thoſe very Books which were held Sacred by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time. And thus by *J. K*'s leave a man may be ſatisfied what be the true Books, without being aſſured which is the true Church or the true Religion.

Being then aſſured about the Books and ſtudying them in the method already ſet down, he ſhall be certainly directed by God to find out every thing neceſſary to Salvation; and this is far from ſetting up a private Spirit to lead us Enthuſiaſtically, but is an appeal to the Reaſon and ingenuity that is common to all men. For let me ask *J. K.* how the Decrees and Canons of the Council of *Trent* are to be underſtood? He himſelf ſays, the meaning of thoſe is plainly and certainly to be known, yet every Reader muſt expound them to himſelf in that eaſie and clear ſence which beſt agrees with the words. Is this therefore to ſet up a private ſpirit to enterpret theſe Canons? I know he will ſay (and with good reaſon too)

too) that it is far from it; and with the ſame warrant do I aſſert that the conſidering of Scripture according to the method propoſed, is not to interpret it by a private Spirit, but by the clear conduct of our underſtandings directed by the divine Grace which is freely given to all that ask it.

If after all this it be replyed, How is it then that there are ſuch different Expoſitors and Expoſitions of Scripture? the Anſwer is plain, by ſending back the Reader to what hath been ſaid of the corruption of mens minds; and as long as men live ſo ill as they do, it is to no purpoſe to expect they ſhall think or underſtand aright. Beſides, there be a great many things in the Scriptures which are not Articles of Faith, which every man is not bound to know and conceive aright under the hazard of Damnation, and about which there may be diſputings and different Opinions without any hazard. If any ſet up particular Opinions in matters juſtly controvertible and of leſs moment, and impoſe theſe on all with ſevere Sanctions, and if he have Authority to caſt all out of the Church Society that do not agree with him, or if he have not that Authority, if he do ſeparate from the Communion of the Church becauſe they will not receive or hearken to his conceits, he is a Schiſmatick; for a dogmatizing and dictating ſpirit, if ſtrengthned with

with power, doth always lead to perſecution, and if it want it, to ſeparation.

And thus I think enough is ſaid for proving that the way to Salvation is not at all uncertain in our Church, ſince it is no other but that new and living way which our Saviour did Conſecrate through his fleſh. But in this we are ſtrongly confirmed, when we find the ancient Martyrs, Fathers and Doctors of the Church going in the ſame Method, and by it Converting the Nations, enduring Martyrdome and giving glory to their moſt holy Faith and to its moſt holy Author, whoſe Decrees, when met in Councils, and Doctrines delivered in their writings do ſo agree with Ours in all matters of Faith, that we decline not to put the whole debates between us and them to this Tryal. *J. K.* thinks we cannot know what Fathers or what Councils to receive, but by firſt acknowledging a true Church which muſt tell what Fathers and Councils to receive. But this being a matter of Fact, we are to judge of it as of all matters of Fact that were tranſacted ſome Ages ago, and by the evidence of Teſtimonies are to find out the truth concerning the Fathers and Councils, and their Writings and Decrees. We have good reaſon to decline the writers of the latter Ages, ſince we plainly ſee that upon the overthrow

of the Weſtern Empire by the *Goths* and *Vandals* and other Northern Nations, and of the Eaſtern Empire by the *Saracens* and other *Mahometans*, Religion and Learning were quickly brought under ſad and laſting decays, which is confeſt by writers on all ſides.

And what *J. K.* ſays, That we may as well expect the whole Goſpel in the firſt Chapter of S. *Matthew*, as all Faith of the Church in the firſt four General Councils, is very impertinently alledged. Did we ask for all the definitions of the Church in the firſt Canon of *Nice*, his compariſon might well take place; but it cannot be fitly uſed in our caſe who ſay we are the true Catholick Apoſtolick Chriſtians, becauſe we in all things agree with the Churches of God, as they were during their greateſt purity both in the perſecutions, and after thoſe for two Ages. Certainly if we hold all that Faith they then held, and if they were ſaved, we may be ſo too; and you cannot paſs a ſevere ſentence on us which will not likewiſe take hold of them. *J. K.* cannot deny but they ſtated the Chriſtian Faith in very formal Creeds, and one of them expreſly decreed That no new addition ſhould be made to the Creed; and ſo we who receive that Creed, though at all this diſtance from them, are really in Communion with them,

from

from which thoſe have departed, who have made ſuch vaſt additions to the Creed. And thus it appears we are in the ſame way which our Saviour firſt opened and in which that glorious cloud of witneſſes followed him, and are ſtill in Communion with *Rome* as ſhe was when her Faith was ſpoken of through the whole world, and therefore we are in a ſafe way to Salvation.

But becauſe Chriſtians muſt live together in Unity and Charity, and in order to that end muſt aſſociate together in the Worſhip of God in mutual Councils and other neceſſary parts of Government and ſome External rites for maintaining the viſible acknowledgment of the Faith, therefore we have rules given in Scripture no leſs expreſs for obeying the Civil powers in all their Commands that are not plainly contrary either to Natural or revealed Religion, which is a clear and conſtant rule by which we may be ſatisfied if our minds be right prepared and qualified, as was before ſet down. And if by the diſorder of our underſtandings, through the corruptions of the natural man, we be brought under Errors, we have our ſelves to blame. Next to this we are to aſſociate our ſelves with all who Worſhip God as long as there is not ſome great corruption in it, ſo that we can no longer continue in it without ſin. If others be

formal or guilty in it, that is none of our fault, and can never warrant our departure from that Communion of Saints in worſhip. Therefore the particular Forms of Worſhip are to be agreed on by the Guides and Paſtors of the Church, which muſt ſtill be received by all till they put us to act or aſſiſt in ſomewhat that is evil, or be defective in ſome neceſſary part of Divine worſhip. And the great rule by which the Guides of the Church ought to compoſe theſe Forms, is the conſtant and univerſal practice of the Churches of God in their beſt times; Calculating theſe as near as may be to the preſent Conſtitutions and tempers of men, ſo as to avoid all unneceſſary ſcandal, and to edifie the people by them.

Therefore we dare appeal to all juſt and impartial Judges, if our Church have not obſerved this rule in all the parts of our Worſhip, to bring things as near as could be to the Primitive Forms; and if in ſome particulars we have departed from them, ſuch as the not Commemorating expreſly the dead, or receiving gifts in their Names in the holy Communion, the not uſing the Chriſm in Confirmation, nor the ſign of the Croſs on all occaſions, or if we kneel in Churches on Sundays, and betwixt Eaſter and Pentecoſt, which are the moſt conſiderable things that now occurr to me, in which we are not exactly

actly conform to the Primitive Church; these are both things of less importance, and by the following Superstition and other abuses were very much corrupted. And it is certain that all things not Necessary when much abused, how innocent, nay how useful soever they may be, yet may very reasonably be left out and laid aside as the Pastors of the Church see cause. If after all this Evidence there be great divisions among us, we owe these, next to the corruption of manners, to the daily practises of such as *J. K.* who (as is offered to be made out by many) have under all disguises laboured the renting us to pieces, and our sins are such that these wicked designs prove daily but too successful.

But after all the mist and dust any may study to raise, I doubt not but to serious considerers it will appear, that we of this Church are in a clear and safe way, and that our doctrine is no other than what our Saviour and his Apostles delivered, and what the first Christians and their Successors for many Ages believed; and that we are in the same Method of finding out the true Faith which they followed: all which I shall conclude with these excellent and divinely Charitable Versicles of our Litany:

That it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of Grace, to hear meekly thy

Word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

That it may pleaſe thee to bring into the way of truth all ſuch as have erred and are deceived, and that it may pleaſe thee to have mercy upon all men.

We beſeech thee to hear us good Lord.

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